Differential Error Types in Second-Language Students' Written and Spoken Texts

Implications for Instruction in Writing

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This article reports on an empirical study undertaken at the University of the North, South Africa, to test personal classroom observation and anecdotal evidence about the persistent gap between writing and spoken proficiencies among learners of English as a second language. A comparative and contrastive analysis of speech samples in the study showed a significant higher proportion of morpho-syntactic nonstandard forms in the learners' written compositions and more nonstandard discourse forms in their oral presentations. As a result, it is argued that this gap may be minimized when learners' written interlanguage variety is used productively as a means toward normative writing proficiency. Recommendations for remedial instruction in second-language writing pedagogy, within the framework of Cummins's conversational abilities and academic language proficiency, are offered for adaptation in comparable situations.

Keywords: second language; interlanguage writing; composition

A large number of studies on language teaching shows that writing, among the four macroskills of communication, is the most complex skill to acquire in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) instructions (e.g., Bell & Burnaby, 1984; Bialystok, 1978; Brown & Yule, 1983; Krashen, 1984; Nunan, 1989; White, 1981). Further, contrastive analysis studies are increasingly revealing that the problems experienced by L2 writers are far deeper than those encountered by their L1 counterparts (e.g., Currie, 2001; Grabe, 2001). This has led

to a proliferation of intensive inquiries into instruction in L2 writing that have sought to understand L2 writing as a distinctive process. But because L2 writing instruction is not yet fully theorized (Grabe, 2001; Sengupta & Xiao, 2002), its practitioners may respond to teaching challenges by duplicating L1 practices, practices that often pay exclusive attention to writing, sometimes to the detriment of other macroskills of communication. This is particularly the case in service courses like English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for specific purposes (ESP).

Additionally, because assessment practices often emphasize writing in the academia, teachers may be pressured to overemphasize writing to ensure the academic progress of their learners, which is, to date, assessed mainly through the written mode in the form of tests, assignments, research papers, and dissertations (Hamp-Lyons, 2001; North & Pillay, 2002). Reflecting on this phenomenon, North and Pillay (2002), for example, contend that "writing, unlike other skills, provides visible evidence that work has been duly performed" (p. 142). In this way, EAP's bias toward writing is institutionalized, and efforts to teach it as an integral part of the whole communication skills are therefore compromised.

Well-known theories of L1 used in L2 writing instruction include (a) expressionist theory, which regards writing as a process of discovering and making meaning; (b) cognitive theory, whose major tenet is that writing is recursive and nonlinear; and (c) social construction theory, which postulates the view that writing is inherently a political and social act (Brodkey, 1987; Santos, 1992; Silva & Matsuda, 2001; Susser, 1994). The first two theoretical frameworks are evident, although without much reported success, in various L2 writing practices. The latter theory (also known as critical L2 writing), on the other hand, is still in its incubation stage as it seeks to challenge a long tradition of university or college standards and practices (Santos, 2001). Although this postmodernist approach to writing clearly poses a challenge to the traditional orthodoxy of writing, it does not provide an alternative methodology for L2 academic writing that is not "modern" or conventional. Consequently, because L2 writing instruction has not yet developed comprehensive theories to guide classroom practice, efforts to teach L2 writing based on L1 composition practices may be misguided and ineffective (Frodesen, 2001; Silva, 1990, 1993; Silva & Matsuda, 2001; Susser, 1994; Zamel, 1991).

It is against this background that educators still find many L2 students taking several years to achieve a "modicum of success" in

writing (Kroll, 2001, p. 233) in comparison to their L1 counterparts. In other words, the difficulty of writing in L2 has its source not only in the choice of the best available method or theory of writing but also in the lack of theoretical frameworks that are sensitive and responsive to L2 contexts. An immediate pedagogical question thus emerges: How do we address the special needs of L2 writers in L2 pedagogy without necessarily borrowing wholesale from L1 writing theories and approaches? This study pursues this question by analyzing written data from college students in a South African university to contribute to our understanding of L2 writing systems and to offer pedagogical suggestions adaptable to other comparable L2 writing contexts.

BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study was prompted by a 3-year personal classroom observation of the unexplained mismatch between written and spoken proficiencies among those learning English as a second language (ESL) who were taking a yearlong credit-bearing EAP course at the University of the North in South Africa. Based on the cognitive and expressionist theories of writing, the course emphasized meaning discovery and recursion of writing as a process, and for this reason, the process of writing was equally valued and rewarded by the instructors as the final product itself. Even though the broad objective of the course was to inculcate effective communication skills (both oral and written), writing received most of the focus in the syllabus as it appeared to be the most pressing concern because most of the students were unable to construct a simple sentence in English at their freshman level. The students were required to write weekly assignments; and they received feedback from peers and instructors for continuous improvement until desired products of their writing were produced. In the process, portfolios of each student's writing were created for later use in a student-instructor conference that usually took place at least 2 weeks before the final examination. The course adapted traditional stages of academic writing through which the student writings progressed. These involved thinking (brainstorming), planning, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading (see, e.g., Tompkins, 1990).

With regard to oral skills, the syllabus required that the students do oral presentations in the classrooms based on the readings they made and discuss through formal debate topics selected by themselves in

collaboration with the instructor. As I interacted with the students and observed their oral performance, a pattern emerged where, in both impromptu and planned oral presentations, the students produced an amount of relatively proficient speech that was not matched by their written compositions. Their weekly written assignments were, on the other hand, clouded with morpho-syntactic nonstandard forms and sentence fragments that left a general feeling of discomfort among various instructors in the course. As the coordinator of the EAP course, I was able to gather similar reports from colleagues who were involved in different recitations (workshops) of the course. This anecdotal observation raised a number of questions that this large-scale study sought to answer. The aim of the study was therefore three-pronged:

- to investigate whether the gap perceived anecdotally would repeat in a more controlled comparative study;
- to draw an empirical explanation of the lower written proficiency, if any, despite the great deal of attention given to it in the EAP course; and
- to identify patterns of L2 student writing that can be theorized for L2 writing guidelines in future syllabus design.

METHOD OF STUDY

This study is primarily a descriptive one, involving a comparative and contrastive analysis of the nonstandard forms (referred to as *errors* in this study) calculated from written composition and oral presentation samples of a group of 50 first year students taking the EAP course at the University of the North in South Africa. Both random and purposive sampling procedures were carried out to elicit a representative data from freshman students at the university.

Participants and Context

Fifty first-year students at the University of the North, where the researcher coordinated the EAP course, participated in the study. Using simple random sampling procedure, the 50 participants were selected from a pool of 500 students who enrolled for the EAP course that was obligatorily required for freshman students in most of the university colleges (e.g., the college of law and management sciences).

University of the North is one of the historically Black universities in South Africa, and its student population mainly consists of students from rural areas in the Limpopo Province, where only 0.4% of the total population speak English natively. The students are able to hear spoken English through local radio stations (e.g., Radio Turf). The national television channels that are also primarily English, despite a constitutional commitment to 11 official languages (Act 108 of 1996; see Republic of South Africa, 1996). Other than these media sources, communication in English is limited to classroom instruction, often from non-native-speaking teachers (Buthelezi, 1995; Makalela, 1998). English is rarely used in face-to face conversations in the street, which are primarily carried out in the four dominant languages of the province: Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, and Afrikaans.

The majority of the students form a first generation of university scholars in their families and have had no sufficient exposure to English composition. Coming from families that are typically illiterate and semi-illiterate, the students did not have a tradition of reading English texts in their homes where they could be familiarized with English composition in its various domains. Minimal composition tasks carried out in their preuniversity education employ direct memorization and rote learning and are primarily exam driven. By the time these students enroll at the university, they have learned English as a school subject at least for 12 years, and it has been used as the medium of instruction for 8 years under a subtractive bilingual program. In this program, mother tongues were used as the media of learning for the first 4 years of schooling, followed by a wholesale transfer to English medium from the fifth grade onward. In most cases, when they begin their university education, these students had not yet developed their English writing skills beyond the basal stage. The EAP course at the university was designed specifically to assist these kinds of students to achieve the effective writing and speaking proficiencies needed in academic life. This is the student population used in the study both because they represent a unique group of L2 developing writers and because their writing patterns can contribute to the body of knowledge in L2 writing and writing instruction.

Procedures

Multiple procedures were designed in the selection of the participants and collection of data in accord with the aims of the study. First,

the oral presentation samples were obtained through presentations on the topic of "my family history " from the whole group ($N = 500$) as part of the requirements for the course. Given that the first part of the EAP course was devoted to personal expression, a narrative genre was preferred to other forms of rhetoric organization to ensure that the tasks corresponded with the participants' regular classroom writing activities. Moreover, the topic accorded the participants an opportunity to talk about issues with which they were familiar rather than unfamiliar topics that may have been more cognitively demanding.

Each student was permitted to present on the topic for 10 minutes to 15 minutes to generate spoken texts of approximately 1,000 words each. Ten oral presentations from each of the five participating colleges (10 students per college) were randomly selected for systematic comparison with written compositions. A total of 50 audiotaped presentations were transcribed.

In addition to the oral presentations, all students were required to write a two-page personal narrative on the same topic as they had presented on—that is, "My family history." This presentation was assigned as part of the students' weekly tasks. The two-page length was designed to approximate the number of words used in the presentations (roughly 1,000 words). A purposive sampling procedure was then carried out to select written compositions of the 50 students randomly preselected in the oral presentations. Each composition was matched with the presentation of the same participant so that a total of 100 texts was made available for analysis.

Analysis

Two types of nonstandard language forms—namely, morphosyntactic and discourse—were used as variables in the comparison and contrast of both types of language samples. Nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms as used in this analysis involved morphological and syntactical errors occurring within the sentence or clause level, such as inappropriate use of progressive aspect, overgeneralization of irregular plurals, and agreement markers. Nonstandard discourse forms, in contrast, included both errors occurring beyond the clause level, such as the omission or inappropriate use of cohesive devices, and vocabulary borrowings from the participants' mother tongue.

To ensure interrater reliability, the written compositions and the transcribed oral presentations were duplicated and shared with a colleague who read and marked for both standard and nonstandard constructions independently of the researcher. In the first phase of our analysis, both correct and incorrect forms were counted to determine if, indeed, the rate of production for spoken and written data was comparable. Once this criterion was satisfied, the SPSS software was used to capture the raw scores and, using frequency tests, to assess if distribution of the usages was normal across the 50 participants and the individual variables selected for analysis. From the cumulative totals observed in the data, incorrect forms in both spoken and written texts—the main focus of the analysis—were calculated independently and spread across the participants and individual variables to test their distribution level. The morpho-syntactic and discourse nonstandard forms were counted for cumulative totals and then converted into percentages. Assuming that this study used a larger sample and that distribution of nonstandard forms was fairly normal, tests of statistical significance (paired samples tests) were carried out to gauge the degree of difference as revealed through descriptive statistical counts.

RESULTS

Comparative and contrastive analysis of the samples through frequency counts for each type of language data showed a higher proportion of nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms in the learners' written compositions and a smaller proportion in the oral presentations. In contrast, more nonstandard discourse forms were observed in the subjects' oral presentation and less in the written composition samples. These two opposite patterns are summarized in Figure 1.

This figure shows a greater proportion of nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms (52.3%) from the written compositions and a lesser frequency of 45.4% in the oral presentations. In contrast, nonstandard discourse forms show 75.5% frequency rate in the oral presentations, whereas only 24.4% appeared in the written compositions. Although the difference on morpho-syntactic forms appears to be small at the face value, the t test carried out has shown a statistically significant difference on the eight paired morpho-syntactic forms ($t = 2.84$, $df = 7$, $p < .05$). A total breakdown of the two forms of nonstandard forms and their examples is presented and discussed below.
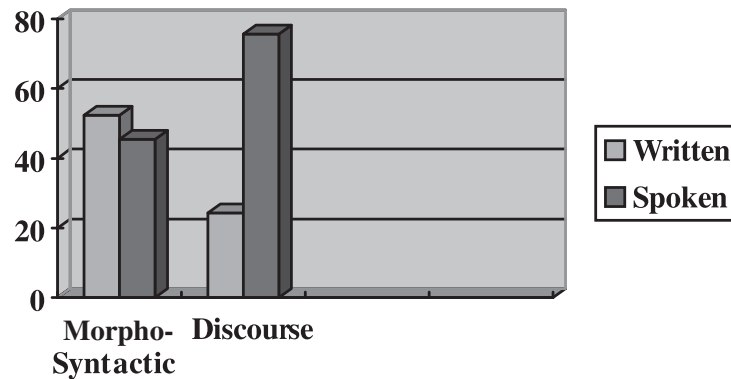
Figure 1.   Overall Results of the Study

Morpho-Syntactic Forms

Nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms at the sentence level are represented in this study by linguistic properties that are usually found in a learner's interlanguage—assumed here in Selinker's (1972) sense as a transitional competence that is influenced by both the learner's L1 and the L2. Examples found in the study can be categorized as (a) overgeneralization of third-person agreement markers, (b) repetition of past tense markers, (c) extension of progressive aspect to stative verbs, (d) overgeneralization of plural markers to irregular plurals, (e) idiosyncratic prepositional use, (f) inappropriate use of articles, (g) inappropriate tense sequencing, and (h) use of resumptive pronouns as illustrated in the order of (a) to (h) below:

a.   The policeman *were* called to come and take the statement.
b.   Thami *did not believed* that.
c.   So, at that time we *were not knowing* what we can say.
d.   But mostly, *womans* they go for it, as they are at [in] the majority, they go for that.
e.   Everyone was happy *to* me.
f.   It was *the* good day for everyone.
g.   Many more of the guys came to me and *pretend* as if they *are* my friends, but my beloved friends were those three guys.
h.   I said those people *they* are at school.

Table 1
Frequencies of Morpho-Syntactic Forms

Morpho-Syntactic Form	Composition	Presentation
Progressive aspect	35 (53%)	18 (33.9%)
Agreement marker	60 (66.0%)	47 (43.9%)
Preposition	76 (53.9%)	65 (46.0%)
Tense sequence	50 (47.6%)	55 (52.3%)
Past tense marker	38 (53.9%)	33 (46.4%)
Articles	29 (60.4%)	19 (39.5%)
Plural markers	66 (54.5%)	55 (45.4%)
Resumptive pronoun	33 (52.3%)	30 (47.6%)
Total	387 (54.5%)	322 (45.4%)

A total number of 1,767 usages were observed in the study. When divided between the two speech registers, 887 (50.1%) were found to be instances of the written compositions, while the remaining 880 (49.8%) were counted as oral presentations (see appendix). In both cases, the usages were normally distributed across the 50 participants with standard deviations of less than 1 (from 0.41845 to 0.70711). Distribution of nonstandard forms across the eight morpho-syntactic forms also showed a normal distribution with mean scores ranging from 1.9600 to 2.7800. These results show that the rate of production between oral presentations and written compositions is about the same and that the morpho-syntactic usages are evenly distributed across a wider spectrum of 50 participants.

From 1,767 usages, 709 cases were rated as errors (nonstandard forms). Of this number, 322 (45.4%) were produced in the oral presentations, while 387 (54.5%) represented errors produced in the written compositions. Table 1 shows the distribution errors per individual morpho-syntactic form.

This table shows a general effect in which the written compositions showed more errors than the oral presentations. The lowest score is found on the resumptive pronouns, where there is only a difference of three (33 – 30). Progressive aspect, in contrast, shows a distant gap of 17 points (35 – 18) between the two registers (i.e., compositions and presentations). A paired samples *t* test was carried out to determine whether the difference between spoken and written production of nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms is a real one or created by chance. The test showed that the difference between the compositions

mean (48.3) and presentations mean (40.3) is statistically significant on the eight paired nonstandard forms ($t = 2.84$, $df = 7$, $p < .05$). This probability allows the interpretation that the difference was a real one and that it is likely to replicate in similar samples.

The results from this large-scale study support the mismatch of proficiencies that were observed anecdotally; that is, written compositions produced more nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms compared to the oral presentations. These findings are unexpected in terms of the established body of knowledge on writing and spoken proficiencies. Nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms are typically expected to predominate in the oral presentations because they are usually casual and less planned. Written compositions, on the other hand, are expected to induce fewer frequencies because of their planned and formal nature. In this study, however, both the spoken and written samples are instances of conversational abilities (i.e., two forms of Basic Interpersonal Communication), yet they were produced in a relatively planned context (i.e., students prepared on the topic in advance). Here, we may be observing some sort of a semiconversational speech, which requires some degree of organizational abilities that are part of academic language. The differences in frequency of nonstandard forms can be accounted for in terms of the register. In this case, writing tended to be so cognitively demanding that mechanics were overlooked because students were so deeply engaged. Contextual cues in the oral presentations, on the other hand, may have aided students in avoiding the use of morpho-syntactic forms that are necessarily obligatory in compositions. This explanation, however, opens up a gray area that needs further empirical enquiry before any concrete claims and propositions can be made. What these findings on morpho-syntactic forms reinforce, instead, is the observation that writing is the most complex skill to learn and that it is difficult to acquire fully in L2 situations.

Discourse Forms

Discourse forms observed in this study show a reverse of the pattern observed in morpho-syntactic forms. Nonstandard forms associated with discourse structure have a total frequency rate of 75.5% in the presentations and 24.4% in the compositions. Prototypical forms in this category as observed in the study are the nonstandard use of cohesive devices, conflation of masculine and feminine

Table 2
Frequencies of Nonstandard Discourse Forms

Discourse Form	Composition	Presentation	Total
Gender conflation	45 (38%)	73 (61.8%)	118
Cohesive ties/conjunctions	35 (30.1%)	81 (69.8%)	116
Mother tongue borrowings	2 (1.9%)	100 (98%)	102
Total	82 (24.4%)	254 (75.5%)	336 (100)

pronouns, and mother tongue borrowings. Their frequencies are shown in Table 2.

This table shows a total number of 336 nonstandard discourse forms out of which 24.4% are instances of compositions and 75.5% are cases of transcribed oral presentations. Distribution of the nonstandard forms across the compositions and presentations shows a mean average of 112 and the standard deviation of 8.7. As with the morpho-syntactic nonstandard forms, the paired sample t test shows that the difference between presentations mean (84.6) and the compositions one (27.3) is statistically significant on the three discourse forms ($t = 33.7$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). This finding suggests that nonstandard discourse forms are predominant in the presentations and that the gap between the production of these forms in the compositions and presentations is a real one.

Examples of nonstandard discourse forms observed in the study are illustrated and discussed below in the order of letters *i* to *l*.

   i.   I don't say you don't love that man. You do love *her*, you come far with *her*. [Where the referent is "that man".]

This is a prototypical case of gender conflation. It occurred much more frequently in the presentations (61.8%) than it did in the compositions (38.1%). In either register, one possible account for the occurrence of this nonstandard usage is mother tongue influence because there is no differentiation of masculine and feminine pronouns in the mother tongue. Because the spoken register is less formal and therefore closer to normal expressions in one's mother tongue, it is not unexpected that it would induce "mother-tongue-like" ways of anaphoric reference. The use of *and then* as illustrated in *j* is strikingly interesting:

j.   I'm Daphney, *and then* I'm 25 years old *and then* I started my schooling when I was seven years old. *And then* okay I passed well *and then* in 1984 my mother married a Pedi man, a Pedi nation man and there at ga-Marishane. *And then* we had to move from Rustenburg to Ga-Marishane where we are now staying. I was having some problems there and there *and then* I left. *And then* I fail accounting and Mercantile Law. *And then* okay, I left coming back home to search for work *and then* I didn't work until one of the shopkeepers there at home come and tell me that because you are staying home *and then* you are not doing anything, just come to be . . . eh . . . my assistant.

The use of *and then* 10 times in the passage that is produced in no more than 5 minutes suggests that the speaker has not yet mastered cohesive strategies of linking sentences in English. This phrase, *and then*, translates exactly into a pattern in the learner's mother tongue, Sepedi, where "*gape*," meaning "and then/again," is generally used iteratively in narrative discourse. It appears that the semantic function of this phrase is translated into a repetitious *and then* to fill in the gap for equivalent narrative markers like *first*, *then*, *moreover*, and *further* in Standard English. The presentations in general tended to induce English phrases that are used idiosyncratically because of their semantic equation with mother tongue counterparts. This pattern of linking ideas shows that the speakers think in their mother tongue and then translate into English equivalents that are not readily available at the moment of speech. I also contend that there are semantic shifts of the English cohesive devices as meanings from the learners L1 do no match exact meanings in the L2.

The second cohesive device that occurred with higher frequencies in the whole sample is the use of *maybe*, which is used to reduce the effect of an utterance. For its semantic function observed in this study, *maybe* can be classified as a detensifier (see House & Kasper, 1981). It is illustrated in the speech below:

k.   I am Mokgadi. . . . I think it is right and the other is that when the baby lives with no parents or *maybe* after giving the baby the life you *maybe* you put that baby in the street. The baby doesn't have anyone to take care of *maybe* . . . okay. . . . I can say you can look at the street kids, *maybe* the baby lives like streets kids. I think that abortion should be legalized or is good for us because when you abort a baby *ye leng gore [that which]* you know, you can't take care of, *maybe* its hard to . . . to . . . to . . . feed the baby especially now. I can say if I can fall pregnant now, *maybe* I know

> that I will not be able to support the baby and ha! It would be hard for my parents to support the baby for me because *maybe* at home we are many, I bring another child, so how will they feed the baby?

The overuse of *maybe*, like *and then*, denotes that the speaker has not yet developed a range of detensifiers used in native English communication. It is also noted that the usage of *maybe* is semantically derived from the mother tongue equivalent, *mohlomongwe*, which is used to lessen the claim made in an utterance and as a generic marker of a polite speech. Its use in *k* can be understood as a marker of indirectness in a culture that "preserves face" and not of tentativeness as the case may be in native English communication.

The effect of mother tongue observed in *j* and *k* above is even apparent when speakers needed to emphasize certain points of their speech. They typically switch from English to mother tongue instead of using intensifiers as in *1* below.

l.   *Nna* [me] I think *gore* [that] is a good idea.

Here, the speaker uses *nna*, which is a first person pronominal/subject marker and *that* to emphasize the embedded clause in ways that the English *that* does not.

One striking point about the presentation samples as shown in *j, k*, and *l* above is that there are very few morpho-syntactic nonstandard forms (cumulative total of 24.4) even though the students use mother tongue translations and direct vocabulary as recourse for their spoken communication. It appears that more nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms in the oral presentations do not imply that the students' compositions were stylistically better than their presentations. As indicated earlier, the students may have avoided the use of these forms and, instead, used contextual cues to get the message across. Further, the written compositions, unlike the oral presentations, did not produce utterances of style that showed direct transfer from their L1 and cultural repertoires of expression. The use of mother-tongue-influenced stylistic features in the presentations and the absence of either standard English or mother-tongue-based features in the compositions, taken together, indicate that learners have not yet acquired native-like discourse markers even after 8 years of exposure to texts written in English and exclusive focus on writing in the university EAP program. Again, it can be argued that writing is indeed complex,

but exclusive focus on it does not necessarily simplify its acquisition in this L2 context.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND SOME THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

The overall results of the comparison of transcribed oral presentations and written compositions show that nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms are less frequent in the presentations (45.4%) than they are in the compositions (52.3%). Conversely, nonstandard discourse forms showed higher frequency in the presentations (75.5%) and less in the compositions (24.4%). The lower proportion of nonstandard morpho-syntactic forms in the presentations suggests that students do have an underlying grammatical competence that is not realized in their compositions, and therefore, it confirms the general view that writing is the most complex skill to acquire in L2 pedagogy. In this connection, in the EAP course, overemphasis of writing, often to the detriment of other skills, proves not sufficient on its own in assisting learners to produce successful writing. A challenge faced by L2 writing instructors, therefore, lies in their ability to help learners translate their oral grammatical competence into written proficiency. This means that educators will need to tap on students' spoken ability that often draws on skills or expressions from their mother tongue. Acceptance and systematic guide of the learners' interlanguage writing may be a pivotal step in evolving an L2 writing theory that is independent of L1 methods and practices. This leverage will make it possible for students to develop their "voice" in writing—one of the hardest skills to acquire through formal academic writing.

Interpreted within what was initially called basic interpersonal communication and cognitive academic language proficiencies (currently revised as conversational abilities and academic functions of language, respectively) (Cummins, 2000), one would contend that the writing task in this study was cognitively demanding, whereas speaking made few cognitive demands because it was supported by interpersonal and contextual cues. Although the kind of writing students did was not necessarily academic in the strictest sense, it required academic organization of the text that was not required in the presentations. The lack of sufficient training in this form of

organization and exposure to it outside of the classroom situation can account, at least in part, for its nonstandard use in the written samples because "academic language proficiency depends on the extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling" (Cummins, 2000, p. 67). The results of this study indicate that it is not sufficient to promote and teach composition to the exclusion of oral speech when in fact the development of the former depends heavily on the latter and vice versa. This calls for the teaching of writing as an integral part of the whole communication skills and, in particular, acceptance of spoken repertoires and learners' cultural expressions as a necessary part of the L2 writing process. This is what I refer to as "interlanguage writing in L2." Teachers' awareness of the learner's linguistic and cultural background as well as this transitional stage of proficiency can help bridge the gap between the learners' L1 communicative practices and the L2 target norms.

Furthermore, L2 writing teachers need to expose learners to the target norms by modeling written academic papers or published narratives. This ensures that students do not only learn about writing and practice it in abstract and detached fashion, as the case may be with second-language learners who have not read extensively on academic texts and general writing styles. This modeling may ease problems associated with inflectional morphology and improve the skills of organizing ideas in their writing.

All factors considered, the following theoretical propositions for L2 writing can be advanced:

- Theory of L2 writing needs to be based on the learners' cultural ways of expression (i.e., awareness of interlanguage writing patterns).
- L2 writing interlanguage should be tolerated over time and guided as a significant part of the L2 writing process.
- Writing needs to be learned as an integral part of other macroskills of communication, which may not yet be acquired by L2 writers.

For this model to be accepted, there is a need for attitude change among L2 teachers and students and flexibility of writing standards that are L1 culture specific. In other words, process writing for L2 writers would be referring not only to recursive stages of writing for the final product but also, and most importantly, to a stage of proficiency where recourse from their L1 is acknowledged and accepted.

In this way, we will bridge the gap between L2 targeted norms and the learner's culture of expression, which are often radically opposed.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirmed the anecdotal evidence of a wider mismatch between writing and speaking proficiencies in the ESL classroom under study. First, it showed that the underlying morpho-syntactic competence in the learner's transcribed oral presentations is not realized in their written compositions despite the overemphasis of writing in the EAP program. Secondly, it showed that the presentations are replete with stylistic patterns that are mapped from the learners' L1 and their cultural ways of expression. As a consequence, it is argued that the undue attention to writing skills to the exclusion of other macroskills of communication militates against L2 written proficiency. The target L2 proficiency is the one that among other things, involves

- use of plan to organize ideas;
- precision in word use and meaning;
- use of a variety of simple, complex, and compound sentences;
- full development of topic; and
- the taking of readers' point of view. (Mora, 1998, p. 8)

We observe that uncoupling of writing from speaking, in effect, is a practice in L1 writing where oral competence is assumed. For L2 writers, however, integration of these skills is a necessary practice supportive of their very interdependent nature (Cummins, 2000). L2 writers also need more exposure to writing and modeling of writing (e.g., former term papers, published personal narratives) from both L1 and L2 writers to minimize the gap between knowledge and practice of writing. Taken together, the study recommends acceptance of spoken register and tolerance of cultural ways of expression in the learners' writing interlanguage that should be conceived as a transitional phase of the L2 writing process. All things being equal, however, we need more empirical research examining effectiveness of oral speech repertoires and these cultural nuances from L1 in L2 writing to increase our body of knowledge (database) in L2 writing. These studies will hopefully inform an L2 writing pedagogy that is free from wholesale borrowing of L1 methodologies and theories.

Appendix
Distribution of Correct and Incorrect Morpho-Syntactic Forms

Morpho-Syntactic Form	Composition (Written Speech)		Presentation (Oral Speech)	
	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect	Correct
Progressive aspect	35	76	18	99
Agreement marker	60	64	47	92
Preposition	76	39	65	43
Tense sequence	50	58	55	59
Past tense marker	38	76	33	72
Articles	29	69	19	73
Plural markers	66	37	55	43
Resumptive pronoun	33	75	30	84
Total	387	493	322	565

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