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ABSTRACT
                 This study: (1) examined assumptions made about
development of second-language writing skills by the teaching
profession, as reflected in the American Council on the Teaching of
Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines, and (2)
investigated the relationship between those assumptions and actual
skills development, as reflected in the work of competent English
writers as they begin writing in Spanish. Subjects were students
enrolled in three levels of Spanish instruction at a selective
university. Writing samples written during class time (18 at the
first level, 12 at the second level, 8 at the third level) were
analyzed for general characteristics (quality of message,
organization and style, and standards of language use) of the sets of
samples at each level. The analysis provided evidence that there are
clear distinctions in the writing products of students at various
levels of foreign language study. However, this group of students did
not appear to follow the developmental sequence implicit in the ACTFL
proficiency guidelines when beginning to write Spanish but began by
building on English language writing skills. Clear differences were
also found in the sophistication and complexity of writing products
at different levels of study. Implications for second-language
writing theory are discussed. (Contains 70 references.) (MSE)

NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING AND LITERACY

Technical Report No. 61

The Development of Writing Abilities in a Foreign Language: Contributions Toward a General Theory of L2 Writing

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The Development of Writing Abilities In a Foreign Language: Contributions Toward a General Theory of L2 Writing

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WRITING IN THE FL PROFESSION

Historically, the FL teaching profession has given little sustained attention to the development of writing ability in students' target languages.[1] Most FL professionals have taken the position that writing is a "secondary" or less crucial skill than listening, speaking, and reading, and, according to Herzog (1988), even government language schools have not tested the writing skill as part of the end-of-course evaluation.

For the most part, as Dvorak (1986) points out, what little attention has been given to writing within the FL profession has focused on the production of "correct" forms and on "transcription" rather than on "composition."[2] Moreover, because most FL instructors have not expected that their students would be asked to use the written FL to a great degree in the course of their careers, they have emphasized grammatical accuracy rather than a high level of stylistic authenticity.[3]

The Teaching of Writing: A New Revolution

Compared to the status that writing has had in the teaching of FLs, writing, the teaching of writing, and the development of writing abilities

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[1]The FL teaching profession is defined here as that profession which is concerned with teaching non-English languages in this country. These non-English languages include commonly taught languages such as Spanish, German, and French, and less commonly taught languages such as Norwegian, Arabic, and the like.

[2]Dvorak defines *transcription* as writing which is concerned primarily with mechanics or correction of language forms. She defines *composition* as involving the effective development and communication of an idea or point.

[3]For an excellent overview of the place of writing in FL teaching, the reader is referred to Dvorak.

have become important trends in American education.[4] Much time and attention are currently being devoted to this new "writing revolution." During the last several years, for example, the focus on the importance of writing in the lives of American students has increased, and many claims have been made about the relationship between writing and the individual intellectual development of young people. As a result, calls for the reform of education, which in the past had been concerned primarily with reading and the teaching of reading in American public schools, now emphasize the need for educational institutions to attend to the development of both reading *and* writing. This focus in turn has led to the creation of a federally funded Center for the Study of Writing,[5] and to a large amount of research on writing, the writing process, and the teaching of writing.[6]

An increased national interest in writing, however, does not mean that all students are learning to write better in schools or that writing is currently being taught more effectively than it had been in the past. What it does mean is that much more attention is being given to writing, that high school competency exams in various states expect students to demonstrate writing proficiency, and that remedial courses in composition have doubled and tripled on university and community college campuses.

THE SECOND AND FL PROFESSIONS AND
THE NEW WRITING REVOLUTION: A COMPARISON

In general, the FL teaching profession and the second-language teaching profession have tended to approach the development of language abilities somewhat differently. Specifically, as will be outlined below, they have not been equally involved in examining the development of writing proficiency.

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[4]A thorough overview of the place of writing instruction in American education beginning in the early part of this century is found in Clifford (1989). The current emphasis on writing is described within the context of broader educational trends and tendencies.

[5]The Center for the Study of Writing is one of several national centers funded by OERI (Office of Educational Research and Improvement) within the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on key educational issues. The Center for the Study of Writing was funded for a five-year period in 1986 and refunded for another five-year period in 1991. It is housed in the School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, with a second site at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

[6]Summarizing briefly, the research conducted on writing includes such issues as the nature of the writing process (Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981a,b,c,d; Pianko, 1979; Raimes, 1985; Stallard, 1979); the process of writing as carried out by expert writers versus novice writers (Bridwell, 1980; Flower, 1979; Sommers, 1980); the role of adult and peer response to writing (Freedman, 1984, 1985; Graves, 1983; Newkirk, 1984); the evaluation of written language (Odlin, 1989); the history and effects of prescriptivism on writing (Baron, 1982; Finegan, 1980); writing and technology (Bridwell & Sirc, 1985; Daiute, 1985); and the assessment and evaluation of writing (Huot, 1990).

The Writing Revolution and the Second-Language (ESL) Profession

As might be expected, ESL professionals have been directly affected by the new writing emphasis within the mainstream English teaching profession. Students exiting from ESL courses are now expected to write well in English and even to compete with their English monolingual peers measured against standards established for writing in English as a native language.

As a result of the pressure felt by ESL professionals, much research has been and continues to be carried out on second-language writing (Johns, 1990; Silva, 1990). This research includes work on such topics as business letter writing in English, French, and Japanese (Jenkins & Hinds, 1987); the revising and composing strategies of young children learning to write in English (Urzua, 1987); responses to student writing (Zamel, 1985); composing processes and ESL students (Krapels, 1990; Zamel, 1983); reading and writing connections (Eisterhold, 1990); cultural differences in the organization of academic texts (Clyne, 1987); the composing processes of unskilled ESL students (Raimes, 1985); writing development in young bilingual children (Edelsky, 1982, 1983, 1986); the development of appropriate discourse organization (Mohan & Lo, 1985); the development of temporality in native and non-native speakers (McClure & Platt, 1988); invention preferences of advanced ESL writers (Liebman-Kleine, 1987); idiomaticity in L2 writing (Yorio, 1989); and the development of pragmatic accommodation (Stalker & Stalker, 1988). Recently, several collections of articles (Johnson & Roen, 1989; Lambert, 1987a) have appeared which focus exclusively on the writing of ESL students.[7]

The Writing Revolution and the FL Teaching Profession

Within the FL teaching profession, there has also been an increasing interest in writing. This interest may be due, in part, to the current existing emphasis on writing in this country or perhaps to the fact that the ESL field has begun to examine the nature of writing in some depth. In comparison to the ESL profession, however, work in FL writing can be said to be in its beginning stages. A number of general discussions about writing and writing assessment are available (e.g., Dvorak, 1986; Herzog, 1988; Hamp-Lyons, 1990; Katz, 1988), as are numerous how-to articles (e.g., Farrell, 1988; Herman, 1988; Houpt, 1984; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989; Walker, 1982) and a few textbooks based on current theories about writing (e.g., Valdés et al., 1984). Nevertheless, there are few studies that have actually investigated the development of writing in FLs by American students enrolled in FL classes. Exceptions include, for example, Lantolf (1988) and Semke (1984).

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[7]The research on the development of writing within the ESL perspective is growing rapidly. For a summary and overview of research conducted on this topic on Hispanic-background students within the last twenty years, the reader is referred to Valdés (1989b).

For the most part, discussions about writing in FLs reflect the work conducted in ESL writing and to a lesser degree the research carried out on mainstream writing in the English language. This tendency is not surprising given the current demands being made of FL programs and the existing emphasis on spoken language proficiency.[8] Indeed, it would be fair to say that the writing revolution has not directly impacted the FL profession to the same degree that it has both the mainstream English teaching profession and the ESL profession.

Research Questions Raised by the New Writing Emphasis

The new writing emphasis, even though it appears not to have directly impacted FL pedagogy, has raised a number of important theoretical questions for researchers involved in studying the acquisition, learning, and teaching of second and FLs. These questions include:

1. How does writing ability in a second language develop?
2. What relationship is there between writing skills developed in L1 and those developed in L2?
3. What relationship is there between the development of writing ability in L2 and the development of other language skills (e.g., speaking, listening)?
4. What levels of writing skill development can be expected at different stages of L2 learning/acquisition?

THE PRESENT STUDY

In the study presented here, we seek to contribute to a theory of second and FL writing by examining the assumptions that the FL profession currently makes about the development of writing skills. In order to do so, we have taken the position that the FL teaching profession's most coherent statement about the development of writing abilities in a FL is currently embedded in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*. Even though we are aware that the *Guidelines* were not intended as a description of developmental stages, we believe that they have been most important in providing for the profession an intelligent statement of what we might expect FL writers to do with reasonable competence at different levels of development. Moreover, we see in them an implicit theory about the nature of writing in second language learners that we wish to highlight and examine as a first step in moving toward an elaboration of a more complete theory of L2 writing development.

In this study, then, we have sought to describe the implied assumptions made by the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* about the nature of the growth

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[8]Recently, for example, the profession has been criticized for not producing fluent speakers of FLs who can use these languages in the international business community (Lambert, 1986, 1987a,b).

and change in the writing produced by FL students at different stages. In particular, because of our interest in trying to understand the contributions made to writing development in L2 by first language transfer, we have sought to examine whether or not the assumptions made by the *Guidelines* reflect the writing ability of FL students who have learned to write in English.

Goals of the Study

The specific research goals of the present study were:

1. To examine the implicit assumptions made about the development of L2 writing skills currently held by the FL teaching profession as they are embedded in the writing skill descriptions of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*.
2. To examine the writing products of competent English language writers as they begin to write in Spanish in order to determine the relationship between the assumptions made by the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* and actual skills development.

Given the dual goals of this study, the work carried out included two separate steps: 1) the review and analysis of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*, and 2) the analysis of the Spanish language writing produced by students at a very selective, private university who were enrolled at different levels of Spanish language study.

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE *ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES*

The Analysis of the Generic Descriptions Contained in the Guidelines

Before describing the procedures followed in carrying out the analysis of the generic descriptions contained within the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*, it is important to recall that their development (as Liskin-Gasparro [1984] pointed out) was largely based on existing knowledge about the nature of academic language study in this country and on common views about the process of acquiring proficiency in a language under the specific conditions common to FL study in classroom settings. Based on earlier work carried out by FSI, each proficiency level within the *Guidelines* was constructed to include a constellation of factors centering around the constructs of function, context, and accuracy. In addition to these three organizational elements, each description also focuses on five linguistic factors: grammar, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and sociolinguistics/culture.[9]

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[9]However, according to Herzog (1988), the writing descriptions upon which the 1984 ACTFL *Guidelines* are based were not as carefully graduated as those for the other skills. The discovery of this fact by DLI (Defense Language Institute) in 1981 led to an on-the-spot effort by Pardee Lowe and Adrian S. Palmer at a testing conference to "remove the most glaring deficiencies" (p. 151) from the writing descriptions. This two-day undertaking led to a version of these descriptions that brought them more in line with the speaking descriptions. This

As Valdés has argued (Valdés et al., 1988; Valdés, 1989a), the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (whether it is intended that they do so or not) set forth for the profession a sequence of progression in a number of *other* dimensions (perhaps not focused on by its developers) that students are known (or thought) to follow in acquiring the ability to use a second language. In analyzing the descriptions for each level of the writing modality, it was our intention, then, to discover and describe these other dimensions with some care. Specifically, it was our purpose to examine the assumptions (the factors and elements underlying each descriptive statement for the area of writing proficiency) beyond the stated constructs of function, context, and accuracy or the five linguistic factors listed above.

The Analysis of the Writing Description

For this analysis, each of the descriptions contained in the *Guidelines* for the various levels of proficiency (e.g., novice-low, intermediate-mid, etc.) were coded in order to isolate the various features and elements underlying each level of proficiency. For example, the dimensions underlying the generic descriptions for writing at the novice and intermediate-low levels were identified using the format and procedure included in Table 1.

As will be noted, features were coded according to their primary focus. For example, statements about the origin of the written product, that is, whether a product was spontaneously created by the writer or involved a transcription of memorized or previously learned materials, were coded as Source of Product (*Creativity vs. Memorization*).

After all levels and all descriptive statements were coded, a second set of tables was produced in which the sequence of development across levels was traced for a single feature or dimension. These sequences of development are presented in Tables 2-5.

Writing Products and the Writing Proficiency Descriptions

Seventeen features or dimensions underlying the descriptions of the written production of FL students were identified. Separate tables were produced for each of these features, so that the assumed sequence of development for each property could be appreciated. A composite table was also constructed of these features, which made evident the level(s) at which each feature was considered to be a factor. This table is included here as Table 6.

As will be noted, the same features are not included at all levels of the writing proficiency descriptions. Indeed, some elements are considered to be primarily characteristic of certain levels exclusively (e.g., vocabulary and expression of temporal sequences).

Table 1
Coding and Analysis of Descriptive Statements

Level	Descriptors	Dimension identified
Novice-low	Able to form letters in an alphabetic system.	writing system production
	Able to copy and produce basic strokes of writing systems using syllabaries or characters.	writing system production
	Can romanize isolated characters.	writing system production
Novice-mid	Able to copy or transcribe	writing system production
	familiar words or phrases	length of product source of product (creativity vs. memorization)
	and reproduce some from memory.	source of product (creativity vs. memorization)
Novice-high	Able to write	writing system production
	simple fixed expressions,	length of product
	limited memorized material,	source of product (creativity vs. memorization)
	and some recombinations thereof.	source of product (creativity vs. memorization)
	Can supply information on simple forms and documents.	length of product
	Can write names, numbers, dates, own nationality, and other simple autobio-graphical information as well as	topic areas controlled
	short phrases	length of product
	and simple lists.	length of product
	Can write all symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic system or 50-100 characters of compounds in a character writing system.	writing system production
	Spelling and representation of symbols (letters, syllables, characters) may be partially correct.	mechanical accuracy

Table 2
Sequence of Development: Length of Product

Novice-mid	Can write familiar words or phrases.
Novice-high	Can write simple fixed expressions, short phrases and simple lists. Can supply information on simple forms and documents.
Intermediate-low	Can write short messages, postcards, and take down simple notes such as telephone messages.
Intermediate-mid	Can write short simple letters.
Intermediate-high	Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience.
Advanced	Can write cohesive summaries and résumés.

Assumptions about the Development of Writing Abilities made by the *Guidelines*

Analysis of the writing descriptions revealed a number of unexpressed assumptions about the development of writing abilities in FL learners. It is interesting to note that while these assumptions make a great deal of sense in the case of non-cognate languages, it is less evident that they are as applicable to closely related languages using the same writing system. As will be seen in the sequence of development for the feature *Length of Product* presented in Table 2, it is assumed that FL learners first begin to "write" familiar words or phrases and simple fixed expressions. After this first stage, they are assumed to progress to the ability to fill in information on simple forms and documents, to write short phrases, and to write simple lists. At the intermediate-low level, learners are thought to be able to write (one assumes compose) short messages and postcards and to take down notes and telephone messages. At the intermediate-mid level, learners are expected to be able to compose simple letters, brief synopses, paraphrases, and summaries. It is only at the advanced level that they are thought to be able to write cohesive summaries and résumés.

Similarly, as can be seen in Table 4, the sequence of development for the *Organization of Products* is believed to progress from the writing of a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments to the ability to narrate in paragraphs and to write cohesive summaries and résumés, to the final step— at the superior level—when an underlying organization is strongly evident in the product.

As Table 7 makes clear, however, the relationship between the development of two particular dimensions is not always parallel to other dimensions. As will be noted from the comparison made in this table between the dimensions of *Source of Product* and *Organization*, the *Guidelines* suggest that organizational ability (e.g., awareness of paragraph structure) "emerges" (i.e., is established or mastered) only at the intermediate-

Table 3
Sequence of Development: Creativity versus Memorization

Novice-mid	Able to copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases and reproduce some from memory.
Novice-high	Able to write limited memorized material and some recombinations thereof.
Intermediate-low	Can take down simple notes such as telephone messages. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences on very familiar topics.
Intermediate-mid	Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience.
Intermediate-high	Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience.
Advanced	Can join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Writing may resemble literal translations from the native language, but a sense of organization (rhetorical structure) is emerging.
Advanced-plus	Can describe and narrate personal experiences fully.
Superior	Can write statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields.

high level. However, it is also expected that, beginning at the novice level, students will be able to transcribe, recombine memorized material, write notes, create statements and questions, and compose simple sentences on familiar topics. Taken together, what these two different dimensions suggest is that, even though students copy, recombine, and compose at an earlier level, they will have varying notions about organizational development and inconsistent ability to write in paragraphs until they reach the intermediate-high level.[10]

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[10]Since we are using a developmental model for our analysis, we are reading the *Guidelines* as a statement about the growth of writing abilities which views this growth as moving from step A to step B to step C, that is, as moving, for example, from writing phrases, to writing sentences, to writing paragraphs. An alternative interpretation might use a subsumption model instead. In this case, the *Guidelines* would be interpreted as consisting of a series of levels each including abilities which are subsumed by those at the next higher level. In other words, this view would assume that if a writer can do everything required at level C, for example, logically she must be able to do everything required at level B and A. It is important to note that in both cases, the same hierarchy of difficulty would be present: writing sentences is considered to be less difficult than writing paragraphs. For our purposes, the use of either model would reveal the profession's current implicit assumptions about what is relatively simple and what more difficult in acquiring writing skills. Understanding these assumptions is crucial to the development of a coherent theory of L2 writing development.

Table 4
Sequence of Development: Organization

Intermediate-mid	Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization.
Intermediate-high	An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging.
Advanced	Can write cohesive summaries and résumés as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Writing may resemble literal translations from the native language, but a sense of organization (rhetorical structure) is emerging.
Advanced-plus	Has difficulty at this level supporting points of view in written discourse.
Superior	A wide general vocabulary allows the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed and/or not totally reflecting target-language patterns.

It is apparent from this one comparison that there are interesting incongruities between levels. It is challenging to consider why the notion of organizational development would emerge only *after* an individual has developed the ability to copy, recombine, or create original sentences. There is, to our knowledge, no obvious relationship between the notion of organization in writing and language proficiency development *per se*. Moreover, as we will argue below, there is evidence to suggest that students transfer to their second language concepts such as organization, cohesion, unity of topic, etc., which they have acquired in their first language.

The Writing Abilities of FL Students and the Assumptions Made about the Development of Writing by the *Guidelines*

As was mentioned previously, students of FLs in this country are part of the monolingual, English-speaking mainstream who are experiencing the writing revolution in the schools. Currently, our American students (particularly students at highly selective institutions) can be expected to have developed at least some modest competence in writing English. Some have, for example, passed high school competency tests in writing, been accepted in college on the basis of their admissions essays, and even passed rigorous standardized examinations that include the writing of a timed writing sample.[11]

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[11]Data about the writing of American students is available, for example, from NAEP (the National Assessment of Educational Progress) in its series of reports entitled the *The Writing Report Card* (see Applebee, Langer, Mullis, & Jenkins, 1990).

Table 5
Sequence of Development: Topic Areas Controlled

Novice-high	Can write names, numbers, dates, own nationality, and other simple autobiographical information.
Intermediate-mid	Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience.
Advanced-plus	Able to write about a variety of topics. Can write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interest and special fields of competence.
Superior	Able to express self on practical, social, and professional topics.

The question for the FL teaching profession is then to what degree our current assumptions about the sequence of development in writing are congruent with the actual growth of these abilities in students who are moderately competent writers of English. If we examine Table 7, for example, we can see that a number of assumptions are being made about what these students will and will not be able do in their target language. What is suggested by the writing proficiency descriptions is that students may be able to transfer little to the new writing experience.

However, there is much about this suggestion that intuitively does not seem plausible. Is it really the case, for example, that students who can write coherent and cohesive English prose will begin by writing a loose collection of sentence fragments in a target language? Do we assume that a limitation in language (e.g., vocabulary or syntax) will make them disregard their knowledge about paragraph organization, characteristics of different genres, and the like? What evidence is there that, left to their own devices, students will begin by merely transcribing memorized material? Might it be the case instead that, if they were allowed to write spontaneously without concern for mechanical accuracy, they would use all the resources they have in their first language plus the knowledge they have acquired in the target language in order to communicate real meanings? It has been found (Dyson, 1982, 1989; Graves, 1981, 1983; Gundlach, 1981) that young children, when allowed to invent spellings and structures, write coherently and meaningfully long before it had been expected that they could do so. Might this also be the case with FL learners?

THE PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE SPANISH LANGUAGE WRITING OF FL STUDENTS AT A HIGHLY SELECTIVE, PRIVATE INSTITUTION

In an attempt to answer the above questions, the second step in this study involved undertaking a preliminary examination of the writing of FL students enrolled in a highly selective, private institution. Our specific goal was to focus on the writing of these students at three levels of FL study in

Table 6
Levels at Which Different Features Were Considered to be a Factor

	S	A+	A	IH	IM	IL	NH	NM	NL
1. Writing System Production							XXX	XXX	XXX
2. Length of Product			XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	
3. Creativity vs. Memorization (Source of Product)	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX				
4. Topic Areas Controlled	XXX	XXX					XXX	XXX	
5. Mechanical Accuracy	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX		
6. Functional Ability	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			
7. Complexity of Product		XXX	XXX	XXX		XXX			
8. Comprehensibility	XXX		XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			
9. Expression of Temporal Sequences				XXX	XXX				
10. Organization	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	
11. Audience Awareness	XXX	XXX	XXX						
12. Use of Cohesive Elements				XXX	XXX				
13. Evidence of First Language Scaffolding				XXX					
14. Vocabulary	XXX	XXX							
15. Stylistics	XXX	XXX							
16. Control of Genres	XXX	XXX							
17. Fluency		XXX							

order to determine if differences in writing abilities were apparent between students at different levels. It was our conjecture that there would be clear differences between levels and that a description of such differences could inform the profession's current views about the nature of the developmental process in the area of writing.

It is important to emphasize that this preliminary study was limited to the examination of *writing products* produced by students studying Spanish at three different levels. We did not examine the *writing process*. Moreover, because of the exploratory nature of the study (i.e., because we primarily wanted to determine if there were differences between levels), we chose to focus only on the Spanish language writing of these students and not on their English language writing. We made the assumption that all mainstream, English-background students engaged in the study of FLs at the institution where we conducted our research were reasonably "competent" writers of the

Table 7
Comparison of Two Sequences of Development

Level	Source of Product (Creativity vs. Memorization)	Organization
Novice-mid	Able to copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases and reproduce some from memory.	
Novice-high	Able to write limited memorized material and some recombinations thereof.	
Intermediate-low	Can take down simple notes such as telephone messages. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences on very familiar topics.	
Intermediate-mid	Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience.	Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization.
Intermediate-high	Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience.	An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging.
Advanced	Can join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Can write cohesive summaries and résumés as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature.	Writing may resemble literal translations from the native language, but a sense of organization (rhetorical structure) is emerging.
Advanced-plus	Can describe and narrate personal experiences fully.	Has difficulty supporting points of view in written discourse.
Superior	Can write statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields.	A wide general vocabulary allows the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed and/or not totally reflecting target-language patterns.

English language. We argue that this assumption was justified because of the current emphasis on writing in American public schools and especially because of the writing focus within college-preparatory and honors English classes of which our students were products.

It should be noted that although we are also interested in the process of transfer of writing skills between L1 and L2, for this exploratory study we did not focus on the specifics of this transfer in particular individuals, but rather on whether students at different levels of FL study produced writing (products) which showed increasing sophistication.

Student Background

Writing samples were collected in the spring of the academic year 1989-90 from students enrolled in first year, second quarter Spanish (Spanish A2), in second year, fourth quarter Spanish (Spanish B2), and in an advanced composition class for Spanish majors (Spanish C). Because of the current placement procedures at this university, the assumptions summarized in Table 8 could be made about the amount of study and the background of students who normally enroll each quarter.[12]

We had no expectations that the levels of study we selected would parallel the proficiency levels described in the *Guidelines*. We chose students at different points in their study of Spanish using the existing class levels at the institution at which we carried out our research. As we pointed out, we expected that there would be differences in the students' written production related to years of study, and hoped that those differences would shed light on the nature of L2 writing development.

Writing Samples

All writing samples were gathered from writing produced *during class time* by students at all three levels. In each case, students were asked to write about themselves using the general topic *Yo* (Me). Students in levels A2 and B2 were asked to write approximately 150 words during a fifty minute time period. They were allowed to use their textbook glossaries. Students at the C level were asked to write approximately 300 words on the topic during a forty-five minute period. Dictionaries and glossaries were not used at this level. A total of eighteen samples were collected for Spanish A2, twelve samples for Spanish B2, and eight samples for Spanish C.

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[12]Placement in Spanish courses is based on results of a special "prochievement" examination especially constructed for this purpose. It is geared to the special needs of the language program now in place, which normally produces students at the following levels after each of the four quarters: Quarter 1 exit level: Intermediate-Low; Quarter 2 exit level: Intermediate-Mid; Quarter 3 exit level: Intermediate-High; Quarter 4 exit level: Advanced. Because of the program's emphasis on communicative abilities, the "prochievement" examination is integrative and contextualized.

Table 8
Student Background in the Formal Study of Spanish

Level	Typical Student Background
Quarter 1 (A₁)	No previous college Spanish. May have some high school Spanish.
Quarter 2 (A₂)	1 quarter of college Spanish. Some may have up to 2 years of study at the high school level.
Quarter 3 (B₁)	2 quarters of college Spanish. Some may have up to 4 years of study at the high school level.
Quarter 4 (B₂)	3 quarters of college Spanish. Number of years of high school varies.
Advanced composition (C)	AP credit of 4 or 5. Spanish majors and Spanish education majors. M.A. and Ph.D. students from other disciplines.

Even though we were aware of the limitations of the writing probe (topic) chosen and of the importance of probes in assessing writing, we deliberately chose a topic which would be accessible to students in their second quarter of study.[13] Given our knowledge of the curriculum, we considered that these beginning students might be comfortable writing information about themselves that they normally were expected to produce orally. We also expected that, by using the same topic across levels, we would be able to identify features characteristic of greater or lesser experience with the language itself.

Analysis

A detailed analysis of the writing produced by students was conducted which involved developing descriptive statements about the characteristics of each of the three *sets* of compositions. Specifically, we carried out an analysis of the writing *products* produced by the students. This analysis was carried out independently by two of the authors who examined each of the thirty-eight pieces of writing and provided precise comments about three different elements: (1) Quality of Message, (2) Organization and Style, and (3) Standards of Language Use.[14] From these comments, a summary set of descriptive

[13]An excellent summary of research conducted on writing prompts can be found in Huot (1990).
[14]These three elements were collapsed from the five used by Canale et al. (1988). In their study of writing in first and second languages, these researchers used the following factors: (1) Standards of language usage (spelling, grammar, lexical and structural cohesion); (2) Standards of written documents (genre, layout, paragraphing, presentation); (3) Effectiveness for the reader (formality, ideas, language choice and variety, imagery, clarity or purpose); (4) The image of the writer (ease, confidence, maturity); and (5) Quality of message (originality,

statements was produced for each of the three sets of compositions. The following discussion presents the results of this analysis.

The Writing of Level A₂ Students

Sample A₂-1 is illustrative of the writing produced by A₂ students.

Level A₂-Sample 1

> Soy de Bethesda Maryland. Nací y recibí mi educación primaria en Maryland, pero antes de comenciendo mi educación secundaria, mi familia fue a Wisconsin. Cuando quise ir a la universidad mis padres insistieron que voy a una universidad fuera de Wisconsin. Por eso vine a _____ University.
> Mis padres son profesores. Ahora ellos enseñan en Baylor Universidad. Ellos también hacen investigaciones scientíficas. Creo que yo también voy a hacer investigaciones alguna dia, pero espero que mis investigaciones tienen mas importancia immediatemente.
> Ahora estudio biología. Voy a terminar mis estudios en el año 1991.

All students in this group were able to write about the topic "Yo," very much as they might have in an English-language composition. That is, they were each able to develop the topic logically and to organize the desired information into paragraphs. As opposed to what the *Guidelines* suggest, writing at this level does not appear to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments. There is a clearly conscious organization of the information presented, an organization that is normally characteristic of English-language writing as it is taught in this country. For example, the above sample includes three different paragraphs which are clearly organized according to topic.

Additionally, the writer of A₂-Sample 1 attempts a conclusion. The single sentence third paragraph is used for this purpose:

> Ahora estudio biología. Voy a terminar mis estudios en el año 1991.
> *Now I am studying biology. I will finish my studies by the year 1991.*

The same evidence of *positive* transfer, that is, of the transfer of writing skills developed in English to writing in a FL, is seen in the beginning paragraph of the following two samples of writing at the A₂ level:

Level A₂-Sample 3

> !Oye! Yo soy estudiante de _____ University, y estoy estudiando Español 2 este cuarto, el invierno. Soy un sophomore (este es mi año segundo de la universidad), es posible que yo vaya a estudiar antropología, pero me gusta estudiar biología también.

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interest, coherence). For our analysis, factor one above remained as Standards of Language Use. Factors two and three were included under Organization and Style. Factors four and five were included under Quality of Message.

Tengo dieciocho años y mi cumpleaños es el doce de septiembre (si quiere saber Ud., nacía las nueve por la noche, en Santa Monica, California)...

Level A₂-Sample 4

Escribo un composicion sobre mi? Hmmm. Pues, desde Ud. probablamente esta tratando de examinar de cuanto informacion habemos aprendido, yo comenzo. Yo tengo diez y nueve años (mi dia del nacimiento fue solamente la semana pasadas). A esta punta en la vida yo estoy creyendo de entrarlo el mundo de negocio el año proximo, espero ir a sobre el mar" a Chile. Espero ver los negocios chilenos en operacion, y tambien llegar a ser fluente en español. La lenguas siempre han fascinado a me y desde soy un sophomore tengo solamente dos años quedando antes de salir Prestige University. Yo creo que es una oportunidad maravillosa y no quiero echarlo de menos.

In these two cases, each of the writers attempts an introduction and includes a strategy for getting the reader's attention. The writer of A₂-Sample 3, for example, actually addresses the writer by using the expression "Oye" (Listen). Similarly, the writer of A₂-Sample 4 attempts to interest the reader by using a slightly more sophisticated strategy. She says:

Escribo un composición sobre mí? Hmmm.
Write a composition about me? Hmmm.

In terms of organization, then, it can be said that in the second quarter of the first year of college-level Spanish, the students studied were able to write coherent compositions which in most cases consisted of at least two well-structured paragraphs.

Chart 1 summarizes the general characteristics of the writing produced by the students enrolled at the A₂ level.

The Writing of B₂ Students

In comparison to level A₂ students, the writing of level B₂ students is somewhat more sophisticated. As will be noted in the examples below, these students offer personal information about self, family, studies, lives, and plans with some detail. Some concentrate on only one topic and even include a specific thesis, e.g., the origin of a given name, an experience remembered, a discussion of capabilities and shortcomings. One student, for example, focuses on poverty problems and solutions (current affairs). Another deals with an abstract topic: the nature of happiness. There is also evidence of ability to hypothesize in Spanish and to depart from the topics closely related to self and personal experience.

The writer of Level B₂-Sample 1, for example (included below), takes the topic "Yo" and develops it into a discussion of the problems surrounding self-centeredness. In spite of various serious mechanical difficulties, the writer is able to produce a well-organized persuasive essay arguing that a focus on oneself ("yo") will never bring happiness. It is apparent that the ability to write persuasively, to structure an argument, and indeed to state a strong

Chart 1
The Writing of Level A2 Students

Level A2 students are able to carry out the task of writing an informative piece which focuses on their own lives and experiences. They can carry out this task, in a class setting, during a fifty minute period and using a dictionary. Characteristics of such pieces (which are grouped here under three categories) include:

Quality of Message	Focus of writing at this level is on family, school experiences and activities, hobbies, and future careers.
	Family information includes age, date of birth, and place of origin of writer as well as parents' and siblings' names and occupations.
	School information includes number of courses taken, difficulty of studies, favorite classes, lists of favorite sports, and class standing.
	Reasons for choosing their university are frequently given briefly (e.g., my parents wanted a good education for me).
	Plans for future careers include giving the name of desired occupation (médico), field of study (international health), or degree goal (doctoral degree). Details about family or location of work are frequently given also.
Organization and Style	Information is given in at least two paragraphs.
	Paragraphs focus on one main idea and frequently contain a topic sentence.
	Lead paragraph is used to introduce reader to writer and often includes name, age, and class standing.
	Attempts are also made to interest reader by using devices such as questions (Write a composition about myself?), introductions, and greetings (Oye, Hola).
	Final paragraph is used to provide a logical, if not formal, conclusion to piece. Writers are also capable, however, of attempting closing or concluding remarks, such as "What a life," or "My life isn't fun, but what can I do?" or "I am happy at the university because I like it very much."
	Writer assumes the reader is an individual familiar with American universities and the U.S.
	There is no evidence that writer suspects that rhetorical standards or stylistic conventions differ across languages.
Standards of Language Use	Writing includes the use of simple and compound sentences usually connected by *y, pero, entonces, porque*; very rarely connected by a relative *que* or *quien*.
	Successful tense use is primarily limited to the regular forms of the present indicative. Other tenses, e.g., preterite, present progressive, and some limited forms of the present subjunctive are used with limited success.
	Verb-subject agreement is generally present.
	Prepositions (e.g., *por, par a, en*) are occasionally used correctly.
	English is used as a basis for creating needed lexical items.
	Gender-number agreement for nouns and adjectives may not be totally controlled.
	Selection of contrasting verbs (ser-estar) may be uneven.
	Use of accents reflects memorization of high frequency forms.
	Influence of English vocabulary, spelling conventions, and idiomatic phrases is often evident, but writing is comprehensible to persons familiar with the FL.

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opinion was acquired by this student in his first language. For this student, writing on even such a potentially simple topic as "yo" involves saying something meaningful. One suspects that he might have made the same argument elsewhere, perhaps in another piece of writing. The point is that, in spite of his limited Spanish, the student is quite able to discuss an abstract topic and to present it following the conventions of good writing in his own first language.

Level B₂-Sample 1

> Yo. Para muchas personas ésta es la palabra que mueva el mundo. Todo lo que pasa en el mundo es significante o no es significante según al efecto a "yo." Yo como para satisfacerme, compro ropa para vesti..:ne así que "yo" aparezca guapo, trabajo porque "yo" necesito dinero. Yo hago para mí.
>
> ¿Pero que pasaría si todos los mótivos y deseos se desarollan aldredor de servir a otros? Después de satisfacer los necesitos para vivir, el vivir para otros pasaría una felizidad que "yo" no puedo comprender.
>
> El deseo de "yo" es la felicidad. La problema con los "yos" en el mundo es que ellos buscan para la felicidad haciendo para ellos mismos, cuando 'a felidad real viene de hacer para otros. Las noticias dicen de matar, robar, violencia, la hambre, el imperialismo, la guerra—la ausencia de la felizidad. Pero en cada instancia estos problemas derivan de alcanzar la felizidad personal or la felizidad para su país. Si todos actuan para satisfecar otros, nada de estos pasaría. La Biblia dize "dar" y si los "yos" dan a uno a otro para satisfecar los necesitas estos problemas mundiales no existan. Que la gente no se da cuenta es que el dar no el recibir o obtener es que satisfecha y los problemas del mundo terminaría si los motivos cambian.

As the Level A₂ students did, this student also attempts an introduction and even a "hook" to draw the audience in. He uses the single word *yo* and then proceeds to talk about the meaning of this word and the problems resulting from the *me* focus. He then uses his second paragraph to raise questions about this focus and in so doing, provides a transition to what he views as the solution to the problem. His third paragraph offers this solution, provides biblical support for his position, and concludes with a guiding sentiment: if people's motives changed, world problems would end also.

By comparison, the writer of Level B₂-Sample 2 deals with a far more ordinary and less abstract topic. He is equally able, however, to develop his thesis, the importance of having confidence in one's own ability, in two well-structured paragraphs. In the first paragraph he provides the context in which he learned a valuable lesson about self-confidence, and in the second paragraph he narrates an experience in which he drew upon that lesson successfully. It appears, then, that the writer is able to describe and narrate personal experiences quite competently. One can logically conclude that he is using previously acquired knowledge about writing in his first language to organize his writing in Spanish.

Yo nacé en el cuatro de agosto, mil noveciento sesenta y nueve en Atlanta, Georgia. Para toda mi vida, he vivido en Atlanta, pero no en la misma casa. Cuando yo tenía doce años, mi familia se mudó. Fue un tiempo muy tramático en mi vida porque tuve que cambiar escuelas y estaba yendo encontrarme con nuevos amigos. Yo era una persona inseguro y no quise tener un cambio en mi vida. Pero el cambio fue fácil y aprendí una cosa grande que me ha afectado desde eso tiempo: tenía una confianza que me permitía hacer cualquier cosa que quería.

Un parte grande de mi vida en escuela secundaria fue mi participación en el equipo de lucha libre. Cuando tenía catorce años, decidí ingresar el equipo porque querría algo diferente hacer. Lucha libre fue muy difícil porque no solamente tuve que usar el cuerpo, pero también fue necesario pensar rapidamente. Después de dos años en el equipo, me pareció que yo quise algo más con lucha libre. Yo tuve que ganar el torneo del estado (de Georgia). La idea fue tremendo y de hecho, el ganar fue más difícil. Tres veces, competí en el torneo- cuando tenía deiz y seis, diez y siete, y diez y ocho años. Pero ei primer dos veces, no gané nada. Mi último año en escuela secundaria fue el último opurtunidad ganar. Gané tres luchas en el torneo y hubo solamente cuatro mas luchadores en el torneo. Pero, en mi proxima lucha, perdí. El otro luchador fue increíble, pero no pude creer que no fuera a ganar. ¿Dónde fue la confianza que tenía? Esa confianza mi vida desde mi familia se mudo. Pues yo me di cuenta que todavía pude obtener "el tercer." Yo tuve que ganar dos más luchas, yo lo hice! Fue muy importante para mí. Yo me di cuenta que aunque me pareció que he fracasado, todavía yo pude ganar.

In sum, at the B₂ level, that is, at the beginning of their fourth quarter of Spanish language study, students are no longer satisfied with "playing safe." While it is evident that they could have limited themselves to talking about their studies and their families, students at this level were clearly conscious of the fact that "good" writing goes beyond this level. Indeed, one can see reflected in this writing a background in honors or AP high school English classes, a background which must have endeavored to push students to take risks in writing and to move beyond the safety of known topics and known arguments.

Chart 2 summarizes the general characteristics of the writing of students at this level.

The Writing of Level C Students

The following samples are illustrative of the writing produced by C level students, that is, by students enrolled in a composition course at the third year level. As might be expected, students enrolled at this level have both greater linguistic competence and a greater familiarity with the conventions of Spanish language writing. As compared to first and second year students, those who enroll in upper-level courses in departments of FLs are generally also enrolled in courses focusing on the FL literature. They are in a position, therefore, to have begun to develop an awareness of writing styles and writing conventions in this language. This awareness, on the other hand, may not transfer immediately to their own writing.

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Chart 2
The Writing of Level B₂ Students

Level B₂ students are able to carry out the task of writing an informative piece which focuses on their own lives and experiences. They can carry out this task, in a class setting, during a fifty minute period and using a dictionary. As compared to Level A students, Level B students are able to produce longer and more sophisticated pieces of writing in the same amount of time. Characteristics of such pieces (which are grouped here under three categories) include:

Quality of Message	Even though Level B students may also focus primarily on family, school experiences, activities, hobbies and future careers, their writing can include details about an illustrative or significant past event, philosophical musings about identity, and contrasts between public and private selves.
Organization and Style	In comparison to Level A students, Level B students develop each paragraph more fully. For example, while a Level A student might mention that his family moved to Wisconsin at a certain point in his/her life, a Level B student will also include details about why the move was made, what his/her feelings were at that time, and the effect of that move.
	Attempts to interest reader, when present, are generally made in a separate introductory paragraph.
	Conclusions are generally present; frequently short summary or concluding paragraphs serve this function.
	Writers at this level also assume a reader familiar with the U.S. and remain unaware that writing in a FL may involve other stylistic conventions.
Standards of Language Use	Writing includes the use of simple, compound, and complex sentences.
	Tenses include the use of the present indicative, present subjunctive, preterite, imperfect, conditional, present perfect indicative, and present progressive.
	Both the preterite and the imperfect and the present subjunctive are used unevenly.
	Temporal markers are used with appropriate tenses (e.g., entonces, luego, después).
	Agreement is generally present in all areas.
	Prepositions are occasionally used correctly with infinitives after high-frequency verbs.
	Reflexive pronouns are used correctly in some high-frequency constructions.
	Transitional phrases begin to appear.
	There is still some evidence of lexical invention based on English.
	Except for an occasional sentence or phrase, writing is generally comprehensible to native speakers not particularly familiar with English.

As will be noted in Sample One, below, the writer once again develops her essay following the conventions typically used when writing in English. In this particular sample, the writer criticizes the researchers for asking questions about the subject "yo." In an extraordinary display of discourse and pragmatic competence, she manages to write on the topic without displaying any information about herself.

Level C-Sample 1

Cuando yo tenía once años, un anciano me dijo seriamente que hay tres tipos de personas en el mundo. El primer grupo son las personas que quieren hablar de su mismos todo el día sin escuchar cualquier cosa que uno quiere decir. El segundo grupo es lleno de las personas que hablan solamente para hacer preguntas a otros y despues quieren escuchar y escuchar mientras sus amigos y conocidos hablan de sus vidas. Las personas de este grupo no quieren revelar nada de quien son ellos.

Pero hay otro grupo. La gente de este grupo es distinto. Ellos no quieren hablar de ellos mismos. Esto le parece egoísto. Tampoco les gusta escuchar a otras personas. No tienen paciencia oír las historias no-filtradas. Son demasiado ocupados y no tienen tiempo para ser terapista. A ellos, el ultimo grupo, les gusta leer vidas de otras personas. Así les pueden dar significados a sus vidas propias. Este grupo hace actividades específicas para mejorar la vida de fantasía que viven por otras personas. Miran mucho los programas de televisión que trata de las vidas magníficas de los caracteres. Los "soaps," por ejemplo, les sirven muy bien para que puedan realizarse la vida de sus sueños. Desafortunadamente, es solo esto: sueño. También les gusta ir al cine. Aquí pueden escapar la vida verdadera y entrar al mundo de los actores en la pantalla. Pero el desafío más común para ellos es algo bastante raro.

El tercer clase de gente siempre quieren hacer investigaciones. No les importa el sujeto al menos que trata de las vidas de otras personas. A veces investigan cosas scientificos, pero máscomún son preguntas personales que dirigen a ciudadanos inocentes, preguntas como: escriben sobre la tema "Yo." Normalmente, a mi no me gustan preguntas así. Sin embargo, en este caso, lo conteste.

The writer of Sample Two, on the other hand, appears to be attempting to write poetic prose, perhaps reflecting his sense of "good" writing in Spanish. In this sample one is struck by the writer's efforts to create verbal images, e.g., *soy un bolsillo lleno de tiempo* (I'm a pocket full of time), *mis abuelos son seres eternos* (my grandparents are eternal beings), that are normally not typical of English-language writing outside of the creative writing area. We conjecture that this student has been directly influenced by Spanish literary writing, and that what he has focused on is poetic images. On the other hand, it is also possible that this writer does, in fact, come from an English creative writing background and that he is simply transferring his experience in writing poetic prose to his writing in Spanish.

Level C-Sample 2

Yo

Yo soy un bosillo lleno de tiempo: recuerdos, voces de amigos y parientes, imágenes de lugares y libros; y fragmentos de los "yos" del pasado. Como el tiempo pasa, los contenido del bosillo cambia y transforma. El bosillo es suave, hondo y amorfo. Todas

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las experiencias que he acumulado durante mi vida están allí pero la mayoría de ellas están en las tinieblas del olvido y de la subconciencia.

Me encanta enfrentarme con el pasado: volver a los lugares donde vivía o visitaba cuando era más joven, releer las novelas donde los ojos del otro yo pasaban y reaccionaban a las palabras en una manera muy distinta que los ojos de Ahora. También me gusta pasar algunos días en la compañia de mis abuelos. Para mí mis abuelos son seres eternos. Me parecen los mismos ahora como cuando yo era niño. Yo crecía, maduraba, mudaba, pero ellos se quedaban en los mismos apartamentos, comiendo las mismas comidas y hablando de las mismas cosas. Yo sé que ellos son bosillos lleno de tiempo como yo. Yo también voy a lograr una edad donde mi cara se fija en arrugas. Mi parecer va a dejar de cambiar cuando me ponga anciano como ellos. Pero cuando alcanzo el último peldaño antes de la muerte el bosillo será más profundo y sus contenido más oscuramente ricos que nunca. Yo solamente soy un ser que pasa por el tiempo.

What is evident at the third year level is that students of Spanish are more able to control both organization and language for effect. Even though errors are still present, there is a suggestion that they are becoming aware of differences between writing conventions in English and Spanish. The readable, skimmable essay format consisting of a thesis statement and three to four paragraphs all headed by a topic sentence is slowly giving way to a more baroque form, a form where erudition for its own sake is appropriate at any point in a piece of writing.

Chart 3 summarizes the characteristics of the writing of Level C students.

DISCUSSION

This preliminary examination of the writing products of Spanish language students enrolled at three different levels provides evidence that there are clear distinctions in the writing products produced by students at various levels of FL study. These differences can be categorized and described in a variety of ways. Our own description and categorization, presented here in Charts 1, 2, and 3, are useful only to the degree that they highlight the nature of these differences for the purposes of this discussion.

What these descriptions do suggest, however, is that Spanish language students at a highly selective, private institution, who were assumed to be "competent" writers of English and products of the writing revolution, do not appear to follow the developmental sequence embedded in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* when beginning to write in Spanish.

This preliminary examination of the writing products of FL students indicates that, in cognate languages such as English and Spanish, student writers—especially those in highly selective institutions—do not begin at ground zero when they attempt to write in their target language. In beginning to write in Spanish, these students appeared to build directly on the abilities they had acquired for writing in English.

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Chart 3
The Writing of Level C Students

Level C students are able to carry out the task of writing an informative piece which focuses on their own lives and experiences. They can carry out this task, in a class setting, during a fifty minute period. As compared to Level B students, Level C students are able to produce longer, more sophisticated, and more abstract pieces of writing in the same amount of time. Characteristics of such pieces (which are grouped here under three categories) include:

Quality of Message	Level C students, rather than focusing primarily on details of their lives and experiences, attempt to speak about their inner selves and about the issues the topic (Yo) raises in their minds. Even those students who treat the topic at a more concrete level tend to take a definite position or perspective.
Organization and Style	Level C papers are well organized and well developed. They include introductions, conclusions, and transitions.
	Writers at this level also assume a reader familiar with the U.S. In comparison to Level B writers, however, they appear to be aware of Spanish literary style and language. This sometimes results in attempts to imitate "poetic" language (e.g., "Tras los años," "el verdadero yo que reside en este cuerpo," "un bolsillo lleno de tiempo."
Standards of Language Use	Writing includes the use of simple, compound and complex sentences. There is evidence that sentence structure is used for effect by the writer.
	Tenses used include the entire range of Spanish tenses.
	Both the preterite and the imperfect and the present and imperfect subjunctive are generally used well.
	Agreement is generally present in all areas.
	Prepositions are generally used correctly with infinitives after high-frequency verbs. Other prepositional errors are still present.
	Reflexive pronouns are used correctly in most high-frequency constructions.
	There is less evidence of lexical invention based on English.
	Errors are more frequent in those writings where the writer takes risks in approaching or handling the topic (e.g., when they philosophize, or strive to be particularly poetic).
	Except for an occasional sentence or phrase, writing is generally comprehensible to native speakers.

This investigation also revealed that there were clear differences in the sophistication and complexity of the writing products produced by students enrolled at different levels of FL study. This, in turn, suggests that the development of target language proficiency interacts with writing skills developed in a first language. More proficient students in Spanish were more able to capitalize on their knowledge of writing and of writing conventions in order to produce more competent and more coherent writing products.

These findings, then, point to the fact that there may be a clear relationship between writing in L1 and writing in L2, especially when the two languages in question share both an alphabetic writing system and follow

generally similar discourse conventions. In order to explore this issue further, however, a second study would need to be conducted that establishes the *individual* writing abilities of students in their first language and then examines their writing in a target language. Such a study would allow one to examine the interaction between *particular* writing abilities in English and developing levels of proficiency in the target language. If conducted with groups of students at several different levels, it would be possible to examine differences and similarities in this interaction both within and between groups.

TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORY OF WRITING IN A SECOND OR FL

In spite of the current work that is being carried out on writing in English as a *native* language and on writing in a *second* language, theories of L2 writing that are embedded in the existing rating scales reflect a view of writing that is not based on a coherent view of L2 writing development.[15] At the moment, moreover, these guidelines or scales imply a *different* set of assumptions about the development of writing abilities in languages other than the first. While important and useful within both the ESL and the FL professions, neither of the scales is based on a study and description of the actual stages of writing development in L2 Unfortunately, as the only fully formed (though implicit) theories of L2 writing available, they are both incomplete.

It is our position that an adequate theory of second language writing is needed that can guide both the teaching and the assessment of written language production. Specifically, such a theory must endeavor to explain the differences and similarities between the acquisition of literacy skills in a first language and the acquisition of these same skills in a second or FL. Such a theory must also be based on a deep understanding of the existing controversies surrounding the role of transfer[16] between a bilingual individual's two language systems.[17] The most important consideration in the development of such a theory is that it be based on existing knowledge about the writing processes and on a detailed analysis and description of both second and FL writers and their writing.

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[15]This is true of both the ACTFL Writing Descriptions and of the Six-Point Guidelines for scoring the Test of Written English (TWE), which is part of the TOEFL.

[16]The term *transfer* is used here following Odlin (1989) to refer to cross-linguistic influence which may be either positive or negative, and which may involve both structural factors (e.g., word order, segmental errors, syllable patterns) or non-structural factors (e.g., problem solving skills or reading and writing abilities).

[17]For an overview of the general concept of language transfer in language learning, the reader is referred to Odlin (1989). For a view of the three different theories about the transfer of non-structural factors (i.e., literacy skills), the reader is referred to Cummins (1981), Freedle (1985), and McLaughlin (1987).

The research reported on in this paper contributes to this effort and suggests that a view of writing development in L2 in which positive language transfer plays a strong role may have merit. Indeed, it is tempting to argue, as Cummins (1981) has done, that skilled college-level writers of English are able to transfer and utilize their writing abilities in their L2 *because* they already have strongly developed first language strategies for organizing information in writing. They possess (in Cummins' terms) an underlying cognitive academic proficiency which does not need to be re-acquired in the second language. Even though all writing samples collected for this study reflect a still faulty control of linguistic structure, they also suggest that literacy skills (here, writing abilities) are clearly transferable from a well-developed, prestigious language to a second language studied in an academic context.

It is not clear, however, that Cummins' interdependence hypothesis will be supported when writing tasks different from those tapped by our research are examined, that is, when particular genres demanding cultural authenticity in both form and style are studied carefully. We conjecture that for American FL learners, the process of learning how to use a voice and style different from those developed in their first language will entail what McLaughlin has termed a "restructuring" of their experiences and strategies. Much more will be involved than a simple transfer of "common" literacy skills.

A theory of writing development in second and/or FLs, then, must account not only for results such as ours, but also for cases: (1) when positive transfer plays a minor role, (2) when literacy-related abilities in the first language *have not been highly developed*, or (3) when the writing task requires a restructuring of previously-used strategies. Clearly, the elaboration of such a theory and its direct use in both the teaching and the assessment of writing will involve continued examination and study of both second and FL writers and their writing.

The *ACTFL Guidelines* have had an important impact on the field of FL teaching. We recognize their value and would argue that, in spite of whatever limitations they may have, the *Guidelines* have caused us to examine progressions and sequences of development that had not seemed relevant before. By presenting our analysis and by raising the issues that we have raised here, it is our hope that FL professionals will join their ESL colleagues in carrying out the kind of research that can inform both the teaching and the assessment of writing in languages other than the first.

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