

PREFACE

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Multilingualism is becoming the default in our global world. The present-day global citizens use different languages in different situations. Apart from their mother tongue, they learn languages that give them access to other regions, nations, and worlds. In all countries of the European Union, for instance, at least one foreign language is mandatory in secondary schools. Most students are taught English as a foreign language, the lingua franca in Europe. In large parts of the USA, students move from Spanish to English schooling. In parts of Canada, bilingual education is standard. In Catalonia (Spain) children learn Catalan and Spanish, in Hong Kong English and Chinese. The smaller the world becomes, the more languages are used and learned.

For writing process research, this development into multilingualism entails at least two challenges. First of all, studying the relation between writing in L1 and L2 provides an opportunity for collaborative studies, in different language settings. Second, the issue of generalization of findings comes to the fore. It becomes evident now that we have unjustly neglected this issue in writing process research. We forgot to ask whether it is feasible to talk about 'writing processes' in general, without referring to the language of the written texts, and without taking into account the educational and linguistic culture in which these texts originate. If it is true that writing processes are – to some extent – linguistically and culturally bound, then the implication is that our L1 (and L2!) process studies have a limited scope.

Strangely enough, the issue of linguistically and culturally bound writing processes has been disregarded for a long time. However, now our alarm bells are starting to ring, as soon as we consider the variable of 'text quality'. For how do we define quality of text?¹ In Europe, the definition of a good argumentative text is deeply embedded in the various cultures. In short, and at the risk of overgeneralizing: the German argumentative text is a philosophical personal essay, the French argumenta-

1 Note that the IEA study in the 80s in which the quality of writing performance in several countries was compared, met large rating problems to reach a satisfactory reliable and valid level for an international report.

tive text is defined by logical rationalism, and the British argumentative text is an empirical deductive text. These different versions of what constitutes a 'good' text are easily recognizable, even in contributions to European international journals.

Let's have a look ahead. In the near future, all students in European secondary education are taught at least one foreign language, in most cases two languages. One of these languages will be a variety of English. Via this variety, students will be able to communicate with other persons from other linguistic regions. As a consequence, all kinds of 'Englishes', 'Spanishes', 'Chineses' will come into existence. The mastering of at least one international language will be decisive in the near future for obtaining interesting jobs. As a result of this language movement, most students not only will learn to speak 'English', but also to write in 'English'. And at this point writing researchers meet again. Here we have something in common, something that binds us, irrespective of the country we live in. How do students in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands connect their L1-writing-processes to their L2-writing-processes? Are there linguistico-cultural particularities, to what extent is the acquisition process a general cognitive process, independent from the particular L1 and the cultural schools of thought about what defines a 'good text'?

With the growing awareness that the global will be a multilingual one, in part dominated by varieties of English (or Spanish? Or Chinese?), we also stay acutely aware of the particularities of the various L1-situations and the limitations of generalization. As researchers, we seize the opportunity to develop research programs on writing processes in L1 and L2, to be carried out in different language environments/settings. These studies may reveal much about the extent in which L1-processes are influenced by linguistico-cultural factors, and at the same time, about the different ways in which students in various countries cope with L2 writing.

This 11th volume in the series *Studies of Writing* provide us with research paradigms and findings from various regions, showing us that in different countries similar but different linguistic situations have been tackled. Readers will find a variety of research designs and techniques to study the relation between writing in different languages. I hope this volume will inspire many readers to study the L1 and L2 relationship in their particular environment.

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