

Studies and Essays on
Learning, Teaching
and Assessing L2
Writing in Honour
of Alister Cumming

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Edited by

A. Mehdi Riazi, Ling Shi
and Khaled Barkaoui

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PREFACE

Alister Cumming has significantly contributed to the field of second language (L2) writing. He has more than 100 publications that focus on the learning and teaching aspects of the area. He has also made numerous and significant contributions to research, theory, policy, and practice concerning L2 assessment, and particularly the assessment of L2 writing over the last 40 years. Alister's research and publications cover English as a Second language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts and a wide range of learners, including young learners, adolescents and secondary school students, and undergraduate and graduate students. Alister's contributions to L2 writing are represented in all of the chapters in this volume. In addition to his contributions to the theory and practice of L2 writing, Alister's mentorship of novice researchers has also been impactful. The editors, as well as the chapter authors, have worked with Alister Cumming on different research projects as Ph.D. students and/or co-investigators.

As a tribute to Alister's contribution to the field, we decided to compile this edited volume in recognition of Alister's significant contributions to the field. The 16th Symposium of Second Language Writing in Bangkok, Thailand, provided the first editor an opportunity to approach Alister and discuss the idea with him. Alister was reluctant, believing that this may put much work on the editors' shoulders. However, the three of us were able to team up and were thus able to get his consent for the project.

Upon Alister's agreement, we sent out a call for chapters to Alister's previous Ph.D. students and some of his colleagues. We identified the three broad areas of learning, teaching, and assessing L2 writing to which authors could potentially contribute and received 17 proposals. We reviewed them and provided comments and feedback to the authors so that they could prepare a draft chapter. The editors reviewed the draft chapters and gave detailed comments to the authors. Fourteen authors submitted the revised papers, which were then copy-edited.

The final edited volume includes 14 chapters divided into three sections. The first section consists of six chapters, each discussing an issue related to the learning of L2 writing. The second section includes five chapters on topics related to the teaching of L2 writing. Finally, the third section

contains three chapters on issues related to L2 writing assessment. Each section starts with an introduction by one of the editors. We use the section introductions to reflect on Alister's contribution to the topic of the section (learning, teaching, and assessment) and the content and scope of the chapters in that section.

We are pleased that the project was completed successfully. We enjoyed the whole process, especially reading the papers and learning about the research/achievements of our peers and colleagues from many parts of the world. We hope that readers enjoy reading the chapters as much as we have.

Finally, we take this opportunity and thank the chapter authors who accepted our invitation and contributed to this volume. We are also thankful to Lynne Earls, who copy-edited the whole book as well as Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their collaboration all through the process.

Mehdi, Ling, and Khaled
Feb. 2020

SECTION 1:

**LEARNING TO WRITE IN A SECOND
LANGUAGE**

INTRODUCTION

ON THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING AND LEARNING

A. MEHDI RIAZI

Alister Cumming has contributed substantially to the area of second language (L2) writing. His contributions include books, book chapters, journal articles, guest-editing of special issues of journals, papers in conference proceedings, keynote speeches, technical reports, and other publications such as book reviews and newsletter articles. Alister's contributions have addressed issues related to the learning, teaching, and assessment of L2 writing. Most of his contributions are hard to relate to a particular area such as learning, teaching, or assessment due to the fact that usually two or all the three areas are addressed in most of his publications. Since the focus of the first section of this edited volume is L2 writing and learning, I will present a brief discussion of some of Alister's contributions to this topic.

There are two aspects related to learning and L2 writing. The first is learning to write in a second language (L2), or what has been called learning-to-write (LW). Obviously, most of Alister's contribution to learning to write in an L2 is related to learning to write in English as a second language. That is, a focus on how those who are learning English as a second or additional language learn to write in that language. Not only did Alister attend to the cognitive and thinking processes of learning to write in an L2 (e.g., Cumming, 1989 and Cumming, 1990), but he also attended to the sociocultural factors that may contribute to this type of learning. For example, Cumming and Gill (1991, 194) designed a short duration of culturally relevant English literacy instruction for Punjabi women immigrants in Canada and showed that such a program "had discernible impacts on their capacities to participate in certain fundamental domains in the majority society, to read more frequently for information in English, and to write with improved accuracy and control in English".

The second aspect of learning and L2 writing is related to writing in an L2 to learn a subject matter or, as is more common, writing to learn the content (WLC) in an academic discipline. Related to this topic, Cumming, Lai, and Chao (2016) conducted a systematic review and analysed 69 empirical studies published in refereed journals or books in English from 1993 to 2013. They were able to pinpoint five general claims which emerged from these empirical studies. These five claims show how students use their prior knowledge and experience and develop strategies to deal with the complex processes of writing from sources across a variety of task conditions and texts. Subsequent to this systematic review, Cumming et al. (2018) surveyed the practices and abilities of 103 students at four universities in China as they were attempting to write from sources in English. The researchers studied students in their first and second years of Bachelors' and Masters' programs using both cross-sectional and longitudinal research methods. Results showed emerging competencies among those students when writing from academic sources. Cumming et al. argued that this finding confirms tendencies such as early senses of authorial identities and patchwriting in the Chinese context where English is a foreign language.

Cumming's contributions to "learning to write in a second language" is a matter of learning how to direct one's abilities (knowledge, skills, and processes) in a particular setting to achieve one's defined goals. This view brings together the cognitive (mental) and the behaviourist (practice) views. That is, learning to write occurs as a result of writers going through certain cognitive processes or learning to respond to writing task requirements in different situations. In a review paper, Cumming (2001) illustrated that conceptualizations of learning to write in second languages has been expanded and refined over time to consider the writing processes, the specific sociocultural contexts in which learning to write occurs, and the qualities of texts that learners produce are interrelated.

Cumming's research on L2 writing also provided a solid foundation for the role of writing expertise and language proficiency in L2 writers' writing development. Cumming (1989, 81) found that both writing expertise and language proficiency accounted for large proportions of variance in the L2 writers' written text quality as well as their problem-solving behaviours. Second-language proficiency was found to have an additive role, that is, "enhancing the overall quality of writing produced, and interacting with the attention that participants devoted to aspects of their writing". However, this factor did not show any particular effect on the processes of composing. On the other hand, writing expertise was found to be related to "qualities of discourse organization and content in the compositions produced; attention to complex aspects of writing during decision making; problem-solving

behaviours involving heuristic searches; and well-differentiated control strategies” (Cumming, 1989, 81).

Cumming’s view of “learning”, whether it is learning to write or writing to learn the language and/or the disciplinary content, is an interactive view. That is, he considers learning to happen as a result of the interaction between the individual’s mind (cognitive abilities and processes) and the contextual demands for completing a task. As such and related to the interactive view, Cumming’s principle of “intentional learning” (Cumming 1986) asserts that learning happens when individuals take control of their learning by defining certain goals, monitoring their achievement of the goals, and assessing their learning achievements.

Alister has been instrumental in mentoring and coaching his doctoral students, many of whom are currently academic staff in different universities across the globe. Alister’s legacy on L2 writing research has encouraged his ex-doctoral students to pursue issues related to this area using Alister’s frameworks. The chapters in this section and subsequent sections are examples of L2 writing studies which have been informed by Alister’s ideas. This section includes six chapters, which I will now briefly describe.

Chapter 1, written by Rosa Manchón (University of Murcia, Spain), discusses Alister’s contribution and subsequent developments on L2 writing and L2 learning. Manchón elaborates on and discusses Alister’s theoretical position on writing as a site for L2 learning, that is, writing to learn language. Of the two themes discussed in the introduction to this section, Manchón’s contribution thus elaborates on writing to learn and in particular the potential of L2 writing for language learning. Manchón makes some suggestions for future research on writing to learn language. These areas include more studies on individual differences and writing processes.

In Chapter 2, Mark James (Arizona State University) presents a systematic review of research on learning transfer in L2 writing instruction contexts. The findings of the review “suggest that L2 writing instruction can promote different kinds of learning transfer and this can occur across different distances.” James explains that the kinds of learning transfer needed and the distances across which this learning transfer needs to occur can vary. For example, the learning transfer needed in one context might involve a routine procedure, while in another context, the transfer needed might involve a general principle, leading to a change in accuracy. Therefore, the findings from the review suggest there is a potential for learning transfer in a variety of L2 writing instructions depending on what kind of learning transfer is needed.

Chapter 3 is co-authored by Dorte Albrechtsen and Sanne Larsen (both from University of Copenhagen). Dorte and Sanne report a study in which they investigated how Danish EFL high school learners developed their L1 and L2 writing over time. Using think-aloud protocols, the researchers explored possible changes in the students' writing over 18 months. Results showed that while there was a significant difference in the quality of essays over time for both languages, there were no significant differences in processing over time for either language. Implications for future research on the tracing of writing development are presented by the researchers.

In Chapter 4, Sanne Larsen (University of Copenhagen) reports another study in which she investigated international students' L2 writing experiences in Danish academia. Scandinavian countries are widely using English as the medium of instruction (EMI). As such, Larsen argues, it is imperative to find out how best the growing population of students with diverse language backgrounds could be supported in terms of students' experiences of writing in English. The chapter reports a case study of an exchange student at a Danish university, who was struggling with fulfilling the requirements of academic English performance. Data for the study were collected through five semi-structured interviews with the student over the course of the semester. Results of the qualitative data analysis are presented and discussed with implications for supporting L2 writers.

Chapter 5 written by Yuko Watanabe (University of Toronto) reports a study of English learners' composing processes when they are engaged in collaborative and independent writing. Drawing on Cumming's (1990) notion of L2 writing as a site of language learning, this chapter explores the composing processes in collaborative and independent writing tasks. The researcher investigated how each of these two writing contexts might provide opportunities to L2 learners for language learning. Data were collected from 20 Japanese university students who wrote an essay in English, once in pairs and once independently. Results of the pair dialogues and individual speech-for-self protocols showed that collaborative writing offers and stimulates a variety of opportunities for scaffolded writing.

Finally, in Chapter 6, Ibtissem Knouzi (York University, Canada) reports another study in which she investigated the writing processes and problem-solving strategies of advanced L2 writers. Drawing on Cumming's (1989) model of writing processes and problem-solving strategies, Knouzi reports on the think-aloud protocols collected from a group of advanced L2 learners when writing on different writing tasks. investigate the writing processes and problem-solving strategies of a group of advanced L2 learners when responding to different writing tasks. Results of the think-aloud protocols as related to students' focus on language and idea generation are presented

and discussed to corroborate Cumming's model of writers' writing processes.

All the six chapters included in this section address key issues in L2 writing using Cumming's theorization and modelling of L2 writing. The first two chapters by Rosa Manchón and Mark James focus on Alister's contribution to L2 writing and L2 learning and how L2 writers might transfer their learning across different instructional contexts. Chapters 3 and 4 investigated L2 writing in Denmark. In Chapter 3, Dorte Albrechtsen and Sanne Larsen studied how Danish EFL high school learners developed their L1 and L2 writing over time, while in Chapter 4, Sanne Larsen reported a case study of an international exchange student who was experiencing writing in English as a second language in a Danish university. Chapter 5 by Yuko Watanabe and Chapter 6 by Ibtissem Knouzi both focus on writing/composing processes. The former focuses on how task context, that is, collaborative vs. independent writing tasks might affect the processes writers go through to complete the tasks. The latter, however, focuses on how advanced L2 writers approach writing in English. Of interest in this study is also how this group of advanced L2 writers might use problem-solving strategies when they attempt to complete the writing tasks.

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CHAPTER 1

L2 WRITING AND L2 LEARNING: CUMMING’S CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

ROSA M. MANCHÓN

Abstract

In this chapter I trace Alister Cumming’s key influence on current theorizing on what has come to be known as the “writing-to-learn-language” dimension of L2 writing (Manchón 2011a and elsewhere). I first situate the “writing-to-learn” dimension of L2 writing scholarship within a broader framework that distinguishes between “learning to write” and “writing to learn”. This will provide the framework in which to situate the inquiry into the way in which “language” could be enhanced through writing. I then analyze some of the main theoretical developments in this domain. The approach to be adopted is to start with Cumming’s ideas—commenting on selected extracts from his 1990 article that best represent his thinking on the connection between L2 writing and L2 learning—and follow with a discussion of the way in which Cumming’s theorizing in his early writings has influenced later positions in this fast expanding research strand.

Introduction

An important development in recent L2 writing scholarship is represented by a plethora of theoretical position papers and empirical studies that collectively look into how and why L2 writing—including writing with the help of written corrective feedback—can be a site for L2 learning (see Bitchener 2016; Bitchener and Storch 2016; Manchón and Williams 2016; Manchón and Vasylets 2019 for recent overviews). Importantly, as systematically acknowledged in this body of work, the original impetus for

the theoretical and empirical interest in the connection between writing and language learning ought to be traced back to Cumming's research. Thus, in the early nineties, Cumming (1990, 503), while acknowledging that "writing alone" is not "a sufficient or necessary condition for second language learning", made a strong case for the important language learning gains that could potentially derive from certain forms of writing, which he equated with writing events in which the writer is fully involved in an intense linguistic meaning-making activity. In his own words:

[...] potential for language learning appears in...sporadic episodes of decision making....These occasions emerge when a student is thinking about *both* the substantive content of a text and its linguistic constituents while composing it....These thinking processes are incidental to goals of effective communication...[and] tend to occur when second language learners write under certain conditions, especially when they believe that the substance of their writing merits careful thought, that the purpose of their writing is to convey information to others, and the texts they produce can be improved through rethinking and revision...[T]hese thinking processes may be more effectively fostered when language learners are prompted to exert intentional control over their own written expression (504. Emphasis in original).

Hence, the equation established was an initial need to mean, that would subsequently foster the engagement in an intense making-meaning activity, one in which writers (are prompted to) exert intentional control over their own output, and one that is manifested in episodes of decision making. These decision-making episodes were fully inspected in his 1990 reanalysis of part of the think-aloud data collected for his PhD (published in Cumming 1989) from 23 adult Francophone learners of English (who represented 3 levels of L1 writing expertise and 2 levels of L2 proficiency) while they composed L2 texts of different complexity (informal letter writing and expository argumentative text). On the basis of these theoretically-informed re-analyses, Cumming claimed that the natural disjuncture between the written product and the mental processes required for its generation and revision might help learners to focus on form-meaning relationships, a process that could then result in relevant language learning gains.

In this contribution to the present volume, my aim is to trace Alister Cumming's key influence on current theorizing on what has come to be known as the "writing-to-learn-language" dimension of L2 writing (Manchón 2011a and elsewhere). This would be my personal academic recognition for Alister's work, a great colleague and friend whose work has so much inspired my own thinking and empirical work on L2 writing, in general, and on the potential of L2 writing for language learning, in particular.

The chapter is organized as follows. I shall start by situating the “writing-to-learn” dimension of L2 writing scholarship within a broader framework that distinguishes between “learning to write” and “writing to learn”. This will provide the framework in which to situate the inquiry into the way in which “language” (as a “subject matter”) could be enhanced through writing. I shall then move on to the analysis of some of the main theoretical developments in this domain. The approach to be adopted is to start with Cumming’s ideas—commenting on selected extracts from his 1990 paper that best represent his thinking on the connection between L2 writing and L2 learning—and follow with a discussion of the way in which Cumming’s theorizing in his early writings (not in his most recent contribution to current disciplinary conversations in the domain—Cumming, forthcoming) has influenced later positions in this fast expanding strand of scholarly work.

Writing and Learning: “Learning to Write” versus “Writing to Learn”

In order to situate the focus of the chapter, it is relevant to refer to the various roles and functions of writing in an additional language (L2) (see also Hirvela, Hyland and Manchón 2016). One way of looking at L2 writing is through the lens of L2 users’ acquisition of the necessary competences to express themselves in writing in an L2. This corresponds to the *learning-to-write* dimension (LW) of L2 writing, which in effect represents the central interest in mainstream L2 writing research (readers are referred to Hyland 2011 and Manchón, 2017 for further elaborations). Another potential role of writing (our main concern in this chapter) emerges from the perspective of how and why the very act of engaging in acts of meaning-making in the written mode can contribute to advances in areas other than writing itself. This would correspond to the *writing-to-learn* dimension (WL), one in which a further distinction is established: Writing may lead to learning in the content areas (*writing-to-learn-content*, WLC. Hirvela 2011), or it may lead to the enhancement of L2 capacities (*writing-to-learn language*, WLL. Manchón 2011b; Williams 2012; Manchón and Williams 2016).

In Manchón (2011b, 3), I suggested that “These three perspectives (LW, WLC, and WLL) traverse L2 writing scholarship and practice, although they have developed almost independently from each other, have been informed by different theoretical frameworks, and have resulted in different pedagogical procedures”. More precisely, the LW and some WLC perspectives (especially Writing Across the Curriculum) are to be associated with L2 writing studies and, accordingly, work in this area has been informed mainly

(although not solely) by L1 composition studies, Contrastive Rhetoric, English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes research and, more recently, by Systemic Functional Linguistics and Complex Dynamic Systems approaches. In contrast, the WLL perspective, as well as other WLC approaches (i.e., Content-based Instruction, EMI—English medium instruction, and CLIL—content and language integrated learning—programs) are more closely aligned with developments in cognitively-oriented second language acquisition (SLA) research. Work in this area has also taken stock of previous cognitively-oriented studies of writing processes (as done, for instance, in various contributions to Revesz and Michel in press). The key theoretical and empirical concern in the WLL strand is to provide an answer to a central question: “Can the processes involved in writing—planning, composing, reflection, monitoring, retrieving knowledge, and processing feedback—promote L2 acquisition?” (Manchón and Williams 2016, 569). This question (except for the reference to feedback) neatly mirrors the ultimate aim guiding Cumming’s (1990, 482) paper, which was to ascertain “the value of composition writing for second language learning”.

What follows is essentially an analysis of the psycholinguistic rationale for the purported connection between L2 writing and L2 learning, in which I shall proceed as announced above, i.e. selecting extracts from Cumming’s work, and assessing the influence of his ideas in subsequent thinking. The analysis will be approached from 3 angles: (a) why writing may foster language learning; (b) what variables are posited to mediate potential learning; and (c) what language learning affordances can be expected. The chapter finishes with a number of suggestions for worthy avenues to pursue in future research agendas in the domain.

L2 Writing as a Site for Language Learning: Rationale, Conditions, and Potential Learning Outcomes

As advanced at the outset of the chapter, the essence of Cumming’s (1990) proposal was that (a) the act of composing may result in language learning (in the form of *incidental* learning, thought to lead to *control* over one’s linguistic knowledge), and that (b) such learning potential is crucially associated with thinking episodes of concurrent metalinguistic and ideational thinking that entail reflective thinking and monitoring of one’s own language output. Importantly, he reported that, in his data, the frequency of these thinking episodes with potential value for learning was dependent on L1 writing expertise, a key point I shall come back in later sections. These thinking episodes of concurrent metalinguistic and

ideational thinking identified in his data included: (i) searching out and assessing appropriate wording; (ii) comparing cross-linguistic equivalents (see further elaboration of this phenomenon as a site for language learning in Cumming, 2013), and (iii) reasoning about linguistic choices at all levels in the second language.

Additionally, Cumming (1990, 483) also pointed to the need to refine theoretical proposals at the time of the role of output in SLA—essentially Swain’s initial formulation of the Output Hypothesis (Swain 1985)—in the following way:

A strong version of the comprehensible output hypothesis would suggest that self-monitoring during extended language production is requisite to attaining full proficiency in the second language (Swain, 1985). A weak version would suggest that *reflective thinking* during writing helps students gain *control* over their language production processes (Emphasis added).

In what follows, these ideas will be unpacked and their influence in current disciplinary conversations will be assessed.

Why Writing May Lead to LL: A Problem-solving Perspective

One of the key elements in Cumming’s (1990, 503) argument was that writing may result in language learning gains “when second language learners write under certain conditions”, which throughout the paper he associated with the concept of “comprehensible output” (Swain 1985) and with “composing” and “composition writing”. He characterized composing as a “fundamental dialectic between content (what do I say?) and rhetorical (how do I say it?) concerns as well as ongoing efforts to resolve these discrepancies” (Cumming 1990, 500). It was suggested that this dialectic would occur when L2 writers “believe that the substance of their writing merits careful thought, that the purpose of their writing is to convey information to others, and the texts they produce can be improved through rethinking and revision” (503). In other words, composition writing was equated with challenging writing, an idea that he has more recently (Cumming forthcoming) formulated by positing that writing leads to language learning “through processes of composing”, noting that “conspicuous opportunities for learning the L2 appear when writers evaluate forms of the L2 in relation to their intended meanings, search earnestly to find the best words to express ideas, and switch purposefully between languages to make principled decisions.”

In his pioneering work on the topic (Cumming 1990, 483), the psycholinguistic rationale for the language learning potential of writing-composing was articulated in the following way:

Composing might function broadly as a psycholinguistic output condition wherein learners analyze and consolidate second language knowledge that they have previously (but not fully) acquired [...] Composition writing elicits an *attention to form-meaning relations* that may prompt learners to *refine their linguistic expression*—and hence their *control over their linguistic knowledge*—so that it is more accurately representative of their thoughts and of standard usage (Emphasis added).

These ideas are the basis for a key building block in subsequent thinking, including Cumming's own (Cumming forthcoming). Thus, it is now widely agreed that the language learning potential of L2 writing is critically dependent on the problem-solving activity inherent to the act of writing. Manchón and Roca de Larios (2007) initially interpreted the “psycholinguistic output condition” mentioned by Cumming in 1990 through the lens of cognitively-oriented views of problem-solving behavior, an idea already advanced by Cumming with his reference to self-regulation and problem-solving writing behaviour (Cumming 1990). Manchón and Roca de Larios posited that when L2 writers fully engage in their attempt to express thoughts and ideas in writing (very much along the lines of the “thinking episodes” in focus in Cumming's study), they will of necessity have to solve the multiplicity of problems involved in writing. This problem-solving activity has been found to be mediated by L2 proficiency (see Manchón, Roca de Larios and Murphy 2009, Manchón and Vasylets, 2019; Roca de Larios, Nicolás-Conesa and Coyle 2016).

Importantly, much more in line with Cumming's initial emphasis on the combined interaction of linguistic and cognitive dimensions of composing, more recent theoretical positions have placed special emphasis on a view of “writing abilities as a form of considerable linguistic-cognitive engagement—call it deep processing—that enables writers, through the well-reflected and strategic deployment of linguistic resources, to accomplish the remarkable semiotic feat of creating meaning-ful worlds with language” (Byrnes and Manchón 2014a, 7). This was precisely one of the conclusions in Cumming's (1990, 500) pioneering study: he stressed that L2 writers' decision-making process is both metalinguistic and ideational; that writers focus on language “while concurrently thinking about their ideas and semantic meanings”.

The dual linguistic and cognitive dimensions of writing problem-solving activity was indeed a guiding principle in the theory and research reported

in several contributions to Byrnes and Manchón (2014). The editors of this collection explicitly stressed that problem solving behavior ought to be seen as “*interweaving both psycholinguistic processes* such as planning, formulation, revision, and monitoring [...] *with intense linguistic activity* associated with the meaning-making effort inherent to the very act of writing” (Byrnes and Manchón 2014b, 271 [Emphasis added]). Following from here, the argument is that the deep linguistic processing associated with the meaning-making activity that characterizes complex forms of writing will prompt L2 users to engage in crucial language learning processes, such as noticing or metalinguistic reflection, and analysis of explicit knowledge (see Manchón and Roca de Larios 2007; Byrnes and Manchón 2014a, 2014b, Manchón 2014 for further elaborations).

In short, it is easy to discern the manner in which Cumming’s original position on the connection between writing and language learning in terms of the combined effects of attention to substance and formal concerns has distinctively informed later theorizing on the LLP of writing premised on the problem-solving nature of writing, a position that, totally in line with Cumming’s pioneering position on the issue, is fully cognizant of the “*psycholinguistic and textual nature of writing* tasks in terms of a focus on the linguistic resources for meaning-making” (Byrnes and & Manchón 2014a, 7 [Emphasis added]).

How Writing May Lead to L2 Learning: Necessary Conditions for Writing to Result in L2 Gains

As noted above, the learning that may accrue in writing was premised on a sequence that entailed an initial need to mean on the part of the L2 writer, together with a resulting intense making-meaning activity in which writers (are prompted to) exert intentional control over their own output. Cumming (1990, 483) suggested that language learning gains that could derive from this monitoring activity were dependent on a combination of 3 learner-internal and external conditions, namely, personal significance of communication through writing, availability of L2 knowledge, and availability of time. In his own words:

While composing in a second language, learners may be obliged to monitor their language production in a way that is not necessary or feasible under the time constraints of comprehending or conversing in the second language. This monitoring may foster learning under conditions in which the *communicative value of second language expression is personally significant...*, *sufficient time is available for analysis...*, and *learners have accumulated sufficient analyzed knowledge* (e.g. from previous foreign

language instruction...) or *unanalyzed knowledge* (from sustained reading in the second language...[Emphasis added]).

There is distinct echo of these ideas in current theoretical and empirical work. I have already made reference to recent positions on the **need to mean** as a necessary condition for L2 writers' engagement in the kind of problem-solving activity that can foster language learning, and readers are referred to several contributions in Byrnes and Manchón (2014) for a fuller elaboration. Regarding the issue of **time** mentioned in Cumming's quote above, there is no single account of the theoretical rationale of the language learning potential of writing that does not acknowledge the distinct time-nature of written communication. The idea was already emphasized by Manchón and Roca de Larios (2007), who observed that the off-line nature of writing (in contrast to the on-line nature of speaking) makes it possible for writers to write and rewrite, as well as to pursue an optimal match between the ideas to be expressed and the language needed to convey one's intended meaning. This is precisely what Cumming (1999, 498) emphasized when he affirmed that composing involves "a precise kind of syntactic parsing [...] that would seldom be feasible under the time constraints".

More recently, and closely linked to both the reference of time and use of **knowledge sources** mentioned in Cumming's quotation above, Manchón and Williams (2016, 571) have argued that the slower pace of writing facilitates reflection on the linguistic demands of the task and planning how to meet those demands, in addition to making it possible for learners to "draw on different knowledge stores in doing so, and use these resources to edit their output".

The diverse knowledge stores drawn on when composing was indeed part of Cumming's theorizing. Reinterpreted through the lens of later SLA developments, his proposal was that the knowledge accessed while writing would be explicit and/or implicit knowledge. The former was referred to in the 1990 paper as "analyzed knowledge" acquired through explicit teaching and resulting in explicit learning processes ("from previous foreign language instruction", were the precise words he used, Cumming 1990, 483). Implicit knowledge (referred to as "unanalyzed knowledge" in the 1990 paper) would be the result of the kind of implicit and incidental learning that may derive from sustained access to L2 input, which he associated with "sustained reading in the second language".

These pioneer, theoretical conjectures as to which knowledge sources are used or can be used while writing were revisited by Manchón and Williams (2016) under the light of subsequent developments in SLA research (although not directly relating their analysis to Cumming's work). They provided a fuller elaboration of the possibilities encapsulated in

Cumming's original ideas, again pointing to the dual possibility of accessing both explicit (analyzed knowledge) or implicit (unanalyzed knowledge). They posited:

Seen from the perspective of writing, if the opportunity to plan, reflect, and edit (which allows, or even encourages, learners to access and retrieve knowledge) is what distinguishes writing from other types of language use, an important question is what *kind of knowledge* learners would be able to exploit under these conditions that would otherwise be unavailable (or at least less available) to them. There are two possibilities: 1. Additional time may allow learners to access *explicit (analyzed knowledge)*, and the permanent record left by writing may allow them to compare that knowledge to their written output. 2. Additional time may allow learners to access *implicit or unanalyzed knowledge* for inspection and analysis. Both suggest heightened learner attention to formal aspects of language during writing, which may result in a more complex/and or accurate performance than on tasks in which this access is not available. (Manchón and Williams 2016, 571-572).

These possibilities remain as theoretical predictions in need of empirical validation. However, the predictions regarding the availability of time in the writing condition and its likely influence in learning outcomes have indeed received indirect empirical attention in a promising line of research probing into task-modality effects. Work in this strand ultimately attempts to test hypotheses on the potential benefits that may derive from writing as opposed to speaking. The extant research (e.g., Vasylets, Gilabert and Manchó, 2017, forthcoming; Zalbidea 2017, forthcoming; Manchón & Vasylets 2019, for a review) distinctively points to the greater likelihood of more complex language being used in writing. For instance, in Vasylets et al. (2017) the written mode was found to facilitate the production of more complex, informationally dense ideas as well as the production of more linguistically complex discourse. Additionally, when the effects of modality, on the one hand, and task complexity, on the other, have been inspected in conjunction, it has been systematically observed that task modality appears to play “a more robust role than task complexity in promoting improved linguistic performance” (Zalbidea 2017, 348). In this respect, Vasylets et al. (2017) found not only that mode exerted greater effects on performance than task complexity, but also, and importantly, that task complexity affected oral and written production in intriguing distinct ways: While the dimension of linguistic complexity of production when performing more and less complex tasks showed similarities across two modes, modality-related effects were observed in the areas of propositional complexity, accuracy, and time on task. Another relevant finding for our

current purposes was that more variation between the complex and simple versions of the task was found in the written mode. This insight is especially relevant in the present context because Cumming's (1990, 486) analysis of his empirical data also pointed to a role for task complexity in writing. More precisely, he found that the general tendency in his data was for participants (regardless of their degree of writing expertise) to devote greater composing time and attentional resources to solving problems of language and content when approaching the argumentative task, which was more cognitively demanding and rhetorically complex than the letter writing task. He stressed the task-dependency of composing processes and pointed to the relevance of looking into this variable in the research on the potential language learning effects that may derive from composition writing. He anticipated that the criterial, intrinsic variation of written language would make it "improbable that learning through composing could be uniform for all kinds of text production".

The consistent findings in task-modality studies can hence be interpreted as robust empirical support for Cummings's claim that "While composing in a second language, learners may be obliged to monitor their language production in a way that is not necessary or feasible under the time constraints of comprehending or conversing in the second language" (Cumming 1990, 483). However, the insights obtained so far in task-modality studies have to be taken with caution for a number of reasons, which in various ways take us back to Cumming's ideas of the learner-related variables that may be implicated in bringing about language learning via writing. More precisely, in their review of task-modality studies Manchón and Vasylets (2019) point to several methodological problems in extant research, the most relevant one for our present purposes being that, although empirical findings in this strand derive from research conducted in a variety of contexts with participants from diverse L1 backgrounds, the insights obtained apply mainly to learners of English with an intermediate L2 proficiency level. Apart from the implications that this limitation may have for the generalizability of research insights obtained so far, the question of which proficiency levels have been placed under the spotlight is specially significant for our current discussion given the intricacies of the (lack of) inter-relationship between writing expertise and L2 proficiency in explaining diverse dimensions of L2 communication from the perspective of both learning-to-write and writing-to-learn-language, (see, for instance, Rinnert & Kobayashi 2016; Roca et al. 2016; Manchón 2017).

For the present analysis, it is worth noting that L1 writing expertise was suggested as a key building block in explaining the connection between writing and language learning in Cumming's (1990) theorizing. He

observed that the proportion of thinking episodes of concurrent attention to language and gist (those that he posited to possess language learning potential) in his data was clearly linked to writing expertise, with more expert writers devoting “a great proportion of their thinking to considering language use and gist in conjunction while they composed” (490). He interpreted these findings as suggesting that “literacy skills of the more expert writers may have permitted them to think more productively while they composed about qualities of their language use in relation to their ideas [...] than did the skills of less expert writers” (499). While acknowledging the small sample size in his study, he hypothesized that there might be a close connection between degree of writing expertise and opportunities for metalinguistic analyses of the language, observing that the decision-making episodes potentially conducive to language learning observed in his data were “characteristic” and “products” of the literacy skills already developed and hence might not be “equally available to all language learners” (504).

The way in which language proficiency and writing expertise interact in composing, and the way in which this interaction may be implicated in learning through writing are still today empirical questions. It is an avenue worth pursuing in future research agendas on the affordances of writing in terms of language learning, especially when the phenomenon is inspected through the lens of multicompetence views of literacy development. At a minimum, future research ought to acknowledge the multiple potential combinations of language proficiency and writing expertise that may characterize diverse groups of multicompetent language users, combinations that go well beyond a fixed pattern of initial acquisition of literacy skills in one’s L1 and subsequent literacy development in additional languages. Biliteracy is a much more complex and multi-faceted phenomenon (see Cumming forthcoming, Gentil, 2011, Manchón 2013, 2017, Rinnert and Kobashahi 2016) with relevant cognitive, linguistic, social and even ideological components (see Manchón 2017). For instance, instructed L2 learners (especially pre-university L2 users in foreign language settings) develop simultaneously their writing abilities in all the languages of their curriculum (i.e., their L1 and all the L2s that may form part of their school curriculum) and their L2 general proficiency.

What Learning May Derive from Writing: Potential Language Learning Gains

The precise nature of the learning that may derive from engaging in writing tasks constitutes a central concern in current research on the connection between writing and language learning concerns. Once again,

this area of research interest was part of Cumming's (1990) pioneering analysis of the language learning potential of L2 writing.

In earlier sections, I mentioned two crucial building blocks in Cumming's thinking in this particular area. One is the emphasis on the fact that L2 writers' attention to language while composing does not take place in isolation but rather while attempting to convey meaning in meaning-making acts that are personally significant. The second building block is that, as noted in several parts of Cumming's (1990, 500) paper, the intense meaning-making activity that is characteristic of composing represents a psycholinguistic output condition that facilitates engagement in learning processes that may result in language learning affordances in the form of *incidental* learning (as attentional resources are focused on conveying meaning), thought to lead to *analysis* and *control* over one's linguistic knowledge, and eventual *consolidation* of L2 knowledge, which he posited to be "lexical, syntactic, semantic, discoursal, and pragmatic". Although this range of potential affordances could in principle be anticipated, Cumming (1990, 504) was careful to note that perhaps the most likely language learning effect of composing would be control rather than expansion of L2 knowledge: "At a minimum [...] writing may help students develop better control over their processes of producing a second language without necessarily affecting their knowledge of the language".

Interestingly, the dual possibility of expansion/control of linguistic resources is currently a matter of controversy in SLA-oriented L2 writing research. In their analysis of the issue, Manchón and Williams (2016) suggested that the key question the field has to provide an answer to is whether written production processes can indeed lead to the acquisition of L2 knowledge. They linked this question to another important issue of debate in current disciplinary conversations in SLA research, namely, the relationship of implicit and explicit knowledge. On the basis of previous findings from SLA-oriented L2 writing research on individual and collaborative writing, they advanced that the interaction of these two knowledge sources would be "bidirectional" (578), adding that this would actually be a central premise in any account of how and why L2 writing may lead to the creation of new language knowledge. On the basis of these premises and observations, they delineated profitable directions for future research endeavors in the following way:

It has been claimed that the act of writing prompts learners to consult their explicit knowledge and that collaborative prewriting activities can also encourage analysis of existing implicit knowledge. In other words, the interaction of the two knowledge stores is bidirectional; indeed, any direct role for writing in knowledge creation depends on this claim. The first

direction—the claim that implicit knowledge can be analyzed and made explicit—is probably not terribly controversial. More controversial is the other direction: Can the creation, retrieval, or use of explicit knowledge result in a change to the developing L2 system, as claimed by proponents of the strong and weak interface positions?

These are at the moment theoretical predictions that undoubtedly need validated and substantiated empirically, as discussed in the next section, in which I synthesize Cumming's contribution and look into future developments in the domain.

Cummings' Contribution to Past and Future Developments

Cumming's pioneering theorizing on the connection between composition writing and potential language learning has exerted a crucial (and perhaps not sufficiently acknowledged) influence in subsequent theoretical and empirical work. Research efforts in this area have gradually materialized in a body of publications that has collectively addressed diverse concerns. First, there have been notable attempts to theorize the language learning potential of L2 writing and feedback processing (the latest, written corrective feedback, was not part of Cumming's analysis given that he was concerned with composing processes in individual writing conditions). Second, these studies have set up a challenging empirical research agenda. As a result, many studies have attempted to prove empirical evidence on the manner in which writing itself and the processing of feedback can contribute to developing L2 knowledge and competences. Nevertheless, numerous avenues for future research are open. I shall next mention those that I consider to be more closely linked to Cumming's original claims and proposals.

Future Lines of Research

Throughout the chapter I have made reference to several areas of research in which key empirical questions await to be answered. I will simply reiterate here the theoretical relevance of applying a multi-competence lens to the analysis of the interaction between writing expertise and language proficiency in bringing about or explaining the connection between writing and language learning. I would also like to reiterate the important gap in current empirical research with respect to the issue of the contention referred to in the previous section: which knowledge sources are