

*The Relation Between L1 and L2 Writing Proficiency: A Comparative Study Between Literature Students
and Linguistic Students*

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Abstract

This study is part of a broader project on the relationship between first language (L1) and second language (L2) writing proficiency in different L1-L2 pairings. The aim of this particular study is to contribute to the discussion of the influence of L1 on L2 writing proficiency, specifically on the relation between educational focus and writing proficiency. Based on the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, a positive correlation between the two proficiencies is expected. A total of 31 Dutch students of English Language and Culture, differing in a linguistic and a literary specialisation, wrote two 500-word essays, one in each language. The essays were graded on seven criteria, which were based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) model. It is hypothesised that different educational focus leads to different writing proficiencies. Therefore, the two groups would score better on the criterion of their specialisation: students of literature would excel on the criterion ‘vocabulary’, whereas students of linguistics would excel on the criterion ‘syntax’. The statistical analysis, however, shows no correlation between the grades and type of educational focus. Nonetheless, a significant correlation is found between L1 and L2 writing proficiency.

1. Introduction

Communication is one of the key aspects of being part of a community; it denotes how we interact with one another. Besides the oral form of language, written language is of equal importance in communication. Writing is used to convey ideas, to advert a certain product, or to inform, to name just a few purposes of written communication. It is therefore argued that written language and being literate are major social determiners for functioning in a community (Spolsky, 1982). With language playing such an important role in society, being able to communicate in multiple languages is an asset and sometimes even a requirement. Despite that many researchers have claimed that an influence of the native language on the second language exists (Jiang, 2011; Cook, 2003; Lee & Schallert, 1997; Cummins, 1976), it has also been argued that the L2 influences the L1 (Cook 2003; Pavlenko, 2003). In contrast to the relation between L1 and L2 reading proficiency, the relationship between L1 and L2 writing proficiency is less studied. Due to the bidirectional relation between the L1 and L2 in advanced L2 learners, a relation between L1 and L2 writing proficiency is expected to exist.

The present study investigates the relationship between L1 and L2 writing proficiency with a focus on the relation between educational focus and writing proficiency. Dutch students of English who are specialised in either linguistics or literature were asked to write two essays, one essay per language. Firstly, this study addresses the question as to whether a positive correlation exists between L1 and L2 writing. Secondly, it addresses the question whether a difference exists between L1 and L2 writing among linguistics and literature students due to their specialisation.

In the first section of this thesis, previous research and their implications for this study will be discussed. In the first subsection, the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis with focus on the Common Underlying Proficiency will be discussed and its relevance to the current study will be evaluated. Afterwards, the threshold hypothesis will be discussed in light of the relation between L1 and L2. Secondly, several studies that have studied L1 and L2 writing proficiency will be discussed and compared. Thirdly, possible advantages of educational focus will be discussed. The second section will

describe the methodology used. The results will be presented and analysed in the third section of this thesis. Lastly, the results and implications for further research will be discussed.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. *The Common Underlying Proficiency of the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis*

As a result of successful language acquisition, two, or more, language systems are available in the learner's brain, where each system influences the performance of both languages (Cook, 2003). While performing a communicative act in the second language, either through reading, writing, listening or speaking, both language systems are active (Jiang, 2011; Tan et al., 2003; Cummins, 1979; 1981). This extra brain activity is explained by a theory called the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979), which argues that this activity results in cross-linguistic influence. More specifically, the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis argues that a brain with multiple language systems has, besides some non-transferable knowledge, a shared Common Underlying Proficiency. The hypothesis argues that cognitive aspects of language such as logic, intelligence, and knowledge of other languages, are actively influencing one's use of a language, irrespective of which language that is and therefore resulting into a bidirectional relation between language systems. As a result, the produced language is both a product of a unique language system as well as a shared brain: a shared proficiency.

According to Jiang (2011), languages are interdependent, specifically due to their "fundamental similarities" (p. 178). These similarities, as Pavlenko (2000, 2003) stated, are various elements of language that can transfer from one language to another, particularly: phonology, morphosyntax, semantics, lexis, pragmatics, rhetoric and conceptual representations such as literacy. Theoretically, these (linguistic) domains are sensitive to transfer when the other language has a similar construction, e.i. tonal language or grammatical gender, and are therefore part of the Common Underlying Proficiency. A substantial part of grammar rules and vocabulary of a language, however, needs to be learned per language and is not transferable. Carrell (1989) presented evidence in favour of Common Underlying Proficiency, showing a correlation between L1 reading and L2 reading proficiency. He found that the

subjects who read better than average in the L1, in terms of text comprehension, showed cognitive flexibility in their second-language reading, resulting into a better-perceived proficiency in the L2 as judged by native speakers. However, even though Carrell shows that cognitive flexibility is part of the Common Underlying Proficiency, his conclusion that this results into a higher perceived proficiency is not in place. More general factors such as language education and proficiency are overlooked. Similarly, Lee & Schallert (1997) argue that L2 reading proficiency is strongly correlated with L1 reading proficiency in terms of text comprehension. Nevertheless, these studies argue that reading ability and cognitive flexibility are elements that both language systems benefit from, as both build on the fundament of the Common Underlying proficiency.

Besides the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, the Threshold Hypothesis is another hypothesis on the foundation of language transfer (Cummins, 1976). This hypothesis argues that transfer does not occur if a threshold has not yet been overcome. Consequently, L1 reading skills will not transfer to the L2 if a certain level of L1 proficiency has not been attained. When this requirement has been met, however, the Common Underlying Proficiency functions as a mechanism that influences both language systems, resulting into a correlation between the two language proficiencies. The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis has been extensively studied in L2 reading (Yamashita, 2002; Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995), speaking (Cummins, 1991) and comprehension (Walter, 2004; Vandergrift, 2006), but to a much lesser degree in L2 writing (Flege, Frieda & Nozawa, 1997; Lee & Schallert, 1997; Kubota, 1998; Oi, 1984). However, Jiang (2011) argues that the Common Underlying Proficiency also applies to L2 writing. It is therefore expected that L2 writing proficiency should be affected by L1 writing proficiency.

2.2. *Studies on Writing Proficiency*

Although most studies on the influence of the L1 on the L2 focus on the relation between L1 and L2 reading, there has been some research on the influence of L1 writing on L2 writing. Firstly, Pavlenko (cf. Common Underlying Proficiency: 2000, 2003) reported that rhetoric skills can transfer between languages. Experimental research by Kubota (1998) and Oi (1984) supports the hypothesised Common

Underlying Proficiency in L1 and L2 writing. These studies studied whether Japanese university students used the same rhetorical strategies when writing in L2 English as they did in L1 Japanese. The participants had studied at least eight years of English and were advanced speakers of English. Native speakers of Japanese and English graded the essays on their cohesion and argumentative structure. Kubota reported that about half of the students used similar rhetorical strategies when composing essays and found a positive correlation between the Japanese and English essays. Furthermore, Kubota noted that in cultures with more similar rhetorical strategies, more positive transfer could occur, as the inductive and deductive strategies would not conflict. In a similar study, Oi (1984) found similarities in the way Japanese students used rhetorical strategies their L1 and in their L2 essays and concluded that transfer from the L1 to the L2 occurred. However, Oi's study differed from Kubota's, as different students wrote the two essays Oi's study. Therefore, a within-participant analysis could not be performed and the reported correlation is to be taken with caution. Nonetheless, both studies do conclude that similarities in rhetoric strategies exist. The rhetoric tool of argumentation structure in a text is thus argued not to be language bound. Even though deductive and inductive rhetorical strategies do result into some friction in formulating arguments, and rhetoric is thus partially culturally determined (Kubota, 1998), it is not completely language bound (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014). Hence, these findings imply, as Pavlenko argued, that the quality of L1 writing influences the quality of L2 writing by means of argumentation strategies.

Various other factors have been argued to influence writing proficiency in both L1 and L2. For example, knowledge of and interest in the writing topic (Becker, 2006; Benton et al., 1995; Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Hidi & McLaren, 1991; Huot, 1990; Szwed, 1981; Kintsch, 1980), knowledge of discourse structure (Benton et al., 1995), frequency of writing exercise (Cumming, 1989; Dressel, Schmid, Kincaid, 1952) and frequency of reading (Lai, 1993; Krashen, 1984). Additionally, it is argued that metalinguistic awareness of linguistic features, which refers to the ability to recognise and reflect on language as a process or an object (Birdsong, 2012; for a discussion of the term metalinguistic, see Myhill, 2012), strongly influences writing quality (Birdsong, 2012). Through these language-independent factors, the quality of L1 writing transfers to L2 writing.

However, these previous findings do not imply that L1 writing proficiency can freely transfer to L2 writing proficiency, as the two do not work the same in a non-native speaker brain. Indeed, Silva (1993) concluded in his meta-analysis of 72 studies on L1-L2 writing proficiency that the quality of L2 writing is more constrained than L1 writing. According to Silva's study, the participants, who all had an intermediate up to highly advanced proficiency in the L2, wrote "less fluent (fewer words), less accurate (more errors), and less effective (lower holistic scores)" (p. 668) in the L2. Even though the results may have been more nuanced if all participants had advanced L2 proficiency, as intermediate L2 proficiency is inherently less fluent, accurate and effective than the native language. The conclusion Silva makes is shared by other studies (Dunkelblau, 1990; Cook, 1988). These studies all stated that L2 writings were shorter, less complex and less coherent. The results also suggest that some main hurdles in L2 writing are knowledge of L2 lexicon, syntax and pragmatics and that these restrict the quality of L2 writing. As Pavlenko (2000; 2003) argued, some features of a language, e.g. lexis and syntax, are transferable across language, however, there are also aspects of these very linguistic domains that are language specific and need to be learned per language individually. It is therefore possible that explicit (advanced) instruction on lexis and syntax may positively influence the L2 writing proficiency.

2.3. *Present Study*

Universities' English programmes in the Netherlands often offer specialised tracks in either linguistics or literature (Universiteit Utrecht, Universiteit Leiden, Universiteit van Amsterdam). As a result, students of these two tracks acquire different knowledge and skills. It has been suggested that differences in knowledge and practices result into different proficiencies (Birdsong, 2012; Benton et al., 1995; Krashen, 1984; Dressel, Schmid & Kincaid, 1957), which could result in a difference in writing proficiency. It is expected that increased knowledge and skills on these specialisations, linguistics or literature, results into different proficiencies. Therefore, linguistics students are expected to acquire advanced knowledge on English syntax and literature students are expected to acquire larger vocabularies and have more experience in structuring texts. However, little is known about the contribution of an L2

specialisation to L2 writing proficiency, i.e. whether specialisation on syntax results into higher proficient writings than vocabulary size or writing exercise does.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the effect of L2 specialisation on L2 writing in a writing experiment by comparing students with a linguistic specialisation to students with a literature specialisation. The literature review has yielded indirect evidence that a correlation between L1 writing proficiency and L2 writing proficiency exists. The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis suggests that both language systems are active when only one language is used, implying the possibility of transfer. It is therefore expected that L1 and L2 writing are positively correlated. The question remains whether there is a difference in the L1-L2 relation between the linguistic and literature oriented students.

This study aims to shed light on this question by comparing grades of essays written in the L1 and in the L2 by Dutch students of English. Various criteria were graded: syntax, grammatical correctness, vocabulary, coherence, textual structure, stylistic writing and spelling and punctuation. In this study, the terms *syntax* and *vocabulary* are the criteria that will be focussed on. These terms are used to refer to a broader spectrum of qualities it connotes. *Syntax*, in this study, refers to the complexity of syntactic features such as sub clauses and main clauses, word order and conjunctions. *Vocabulary* includes correct use and variation of words, as well as idiomatic use of language, which contribute to the fluency of written language

By making the aforementioned distinction, two main factors are separated. That is, linguistic related writing factors, such as metalinguistic awareness and knowledge of the core elements of linguistics are separated from literature related factors such as frequency of writing and reading exercise. Past work suggests that focus on different subject matter results into different knowledge and skills; therefore, both types of education may have different advantages in terms of writing proficiency. Two groups of L2 writers are distinguished based on the specialisation tracks offered in the bachelor's programme English Language and Culture at Utrecht University, which will be discussed next. Additionally, hypotheses on the influence of the different language-independent factors on L1 and L2 writing proficiency will be made for each participant group.

2.3.1. Advantages of Linguistics Students

Education that focuses on English linguistics is mainly concerned with explicit knowledge of syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, prosody, and language acquisition. Becker (2006) argued that greater writing fluency is achieved through linguistic resources, as the writer will have to exert less cognitive effort to construct more fluent sentences. Explicit knowledge of these subjects can thus positively influence the quality of one's writing skills (Myhill, 2012; Becker, 2006), as the writer can use more ways to convey meaning in a sentence. Moreover, Janks (2009) described the perk of having a high linguistic ability as to be able to "realise the meaning potential that language affords us. What is selected from the range of lexical and grammatical options determines how this potential is realised" (p. 131). The explicit knowledge of grammatical rules, for example, is a determiner of writing proficiency because it brings structure and cohesion to written text as "the organising principle of language" (Stott & Chapman, 2001, p. 1). Explicit knowledge of grammatical elements thus gives the writer a broader spectrum to construct sentences with and is a key factor in well-structured texts with a large variety of grammatical structures. Students of linguistics may have gained extra knowledge on L2 grammar and this may result into better L2 writings.

Through the explicit knowledge of linguistic features that is acquired in the linguistics track, it is hypothesised that students specialised in English linguistics outperform the students specialised in English literature in the criterion *syntax*. This *syntax* grade is based on the norms of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and reflects a variety of linguistic features.

2.3.2. Advantages of Literature Students

On the other hand, the literature track, which focuses on contemporary literature and creative writing, also has advantages in writing proficiency for two reasons. Firstly, literature students focus more on writing than linguistic students do, due to writing and translation courses. The literature track requires students to write more argumentative papers and translation assignments. It has been shown that the amount of writing exercise directly affects writing proficiency in both the L1 and L2 (Kellogg &

Whiteford, 2009; Cumming, 1989). Second, extensive reading of literary works, which is required in the specialisation track of our participants, directly improves writing abilities (Hirvela, 2004; Krashen, 1984) and our vocabulary (Krashen, 1989). Furthermore, Janopoulos (1986) argued that there is a strong correlation between pleasure reading and writing proficiency. According to Janssen & Van den Bergh (2010) and Wang (2012), this effect is due to literary creativity. These studies argue that reading literature and writing are complementary factors as they both build on literary creativity, an innate capacity of textual structuring and comprehension. Additionally, reading frequently has a positive influence on reading comprehension and reading speed (Lai, 1993). It is therefore argued that frequency of reading is beneficial to the literary proficiency and also directly influences writing proficiency (Lai, 1993; Krashen 1984). In conclusion, the frequent reading and writing exercise of the literature specialisations is expected to positively influence writing abilities.

Due to the advantages of frequent reading and writing, literature students may benefit from having a larger vocabulary to construct text, having a larger textual comprehension and they have more experience in structuring text. Therefore, it may be expected that literature students outperform linguistics students in the criterion *vocabulary*. As mentioned, this *vocabulary* grade, which also is based on the norms of the CEFR, will measure variety of words, correct use of words and idiomatic expressions.

2.4. Hypotheses

According to the Common Underlying Proficiency, the L2 should be correlated to the L1. Based on the Pavlenko's transferable elements of language, L1 and L2 written language should also be correlated. Furthermore, based on earlier studies that found that different knowledge and skills may transfer to writing proficiency, we hypothesise a difference may exist in the L1-L2 relation between students specialised in linguistics and those specialised in literature. More specifically, we predict that students specialised in literature score better on the *vocabulary* criterion due to writing and reading exercise, which may lead to improved writing proficiency due to their abundant knowledge and experience in L2 reading and writing. On the other hand, students specialised in linguistics are predicted

to score better on *syntax* due to their education in the core elements of language. The explicit knowledge gained from this specialisation may lead to more advanced syntactic structures and grammatical ability in written text, resulting into more proficient L2 writing.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

To be able to conduct the experiment for our study, all students of English at the University of Utrecht who were enlisted in the English BA programme were approached. This was considered to be necessary to ensure an adequate proficiency in the L2. Furthermore, Dutch as the L1 was set as a requirement in order to ensure a homogenous participant pool. A total of 31 (8 male, 23 female; mean age = 21) students participated in the overlapping experiment. To ensure a normally distributed data set for all sub-studies, we aimed to have at least 10 first year students and 20 second or third year students. This difference was made, as the first year students would not have picked a specialisation yet, and they would not have had as much writing experience as the second/third year students. Furthermore, the second and third year students who participated should be equally spread over all of the four specialisation tracks offered by Utrecht University. Of these specialisation tracks, one is profiled as a linguistics track and two tracks are focussed on literature, writing and translation. The last specialisation track focuses on culture and communication.

Table 1: Participant Distribution

<i>N</i>	Linguistics	Literature	Cultural Encounters	Total
1st year students	0	7	2	9
2nd + year students	8	12	2	22
<i>Total</i>	8	19	4	31

The participants signed up for two time slots of two-hour sessions within a time frame of two weeks, one session per week. Additionally, the participants received a compensation for their efforts. In the present study, only data from the 2nd + year students were analysed because this group has had specialisation courses in the by them chosen track.

3.2. Topic

It has been argued that external factors such as interest in the topic and knowledge of the topic influence the writing quality (Benton et al., 1995; Kellogg, 1987; Szwed, 1981). More specifically, when an individual is knowledgeable on a specific subject, it will be easier to access and recall associations and facts. According to previous research, writers with knowledge on the subject will not only be more exact and detailed on the topic, they will also have to exert less effort to create more fluent, syntactically correct and organised writing (Benton et al., 1995; McCutchen, 1986; Kellogg, 1987). To eliminate the influence of these external factors as much as possible, it was decided that the participants would write about the subject: *“The cancellation of study financing for students”*. This topic was timely because the Dutch government had recently changed their policy on study financing, and therefore the topic was assumed to be familiar and relevant to all participants. To ensure the consistency of the test, both essays were written on the same subject. As this study aims to investigate the use of words and syntactic structures rather than the argumentation, this was considered not to interfere with the results. Furthermore, writing on the same subject ensured that the knowledge of, and interest in, the writing subject would not differ from the first essay. However, a one-week interval between the two writing sessions was required to minimise the risk of a direct translation in the students’ essays.

3.3. Procedure

The experiment consisted of three parts: two 500-word essays, one written in the L1 and one in the L2, and a questionnaire. The essays were written on computers and the questionnaire was filled in on paper after the second writing session. The participants were split into two groups, half of the participants

wrote their first essay in English, the other half wrote it in Dutch. The second essay had to be written in the opposing language of the first essay. All of the participants got the same writing assignments and received the same instructions. Furthermore, the instructions were provided in the same language in which the essay had to be written (Appendixes A&B).

In order to prevent any writing aid from Word (autocorrect, etc.), the language settings had been altered not to interfere with the present study. This was considered to be necessary to ensure a representative picture of the participants' writing proficiency. The participants were given two hours to write a 500-word essay. The questionnaire (Appendix C) inquired about the attitudes towards L1 and L2 reading. Additionally, the questionnaire collected information on L1 and L2 reading and writing skills. Furthermore, the number of years of education in the L2 and amount of time spent living abroad was inventoried. Lastly, the attitude towards and knowledge of the writing subject was asked. The confidentiality agreement (Appendix D) stated that the students were not to talk about any details of the experiment to ensure other participants took part in the experiment without any prior knowledge.

3.4. Scoring

All of the essays were sent to the researchers via university e-mail and were treated confidentially. The participants' student number, study year and specialisation track were used to categorise the essays, but were not made available in the grading process. Two senior students who also conducted and supervised the experiment did the grading of essays. To grade the produced essays, the CEFR model was used as a basis for our grading model. This EU model for language proficiency describes second language proficiency levels in terms of writing, speaking, listening and reading and attributes six levels of language competence to these categories. The CEFR model was adopted on the following criteria: syntactic structure, grammatical correctness, vocabulary, coherence, textual structure, stylistic writing and spelling and punctuation (appendix E). Each essay was graded on each of these criteria separately. Data not analysed in the present study will be used in other pilot studies. A reliability analysis was performed to validate the grading by the researchers. A high degree of reliability was found

between 10 measurements. The average measure ICC was .839 with a 95% confidence interval from .396 to .959 ($F(9) = 6.239, p < .006$).

4. Results & Analysis

The present study's analysis only included the participants who were in their second or third year ($n = 20$). The selected group consisted of 8 students of linguistics ($n = 8$: 4 male, 4 female; mean age = 22) and 12 students of literature ($n = 12$: 3 male, 9 female; mean age = 21). A bivariate correlation analysis was performed on all participants ($n = 31$) in order to find out whether there is a correlation between L1 and L2 writing proficiency, regardless of specialisation. The correlation analysis shows a moderate-strong correlation between L1 and L2 writing: $r = .46, p < .01^{**}$ (Table 2, Figure 1). Bivariate correlation tests were also performed on the participants. No correlation was found in the literature group ($n = 12$) between the Dutch vocabulary grade and the English vocabulary grade ($r = .39, p > .05$; Table 3), nor was a correlation found between the Dutch syntax grade and English syntax grade ($r = .23, p > .05$; Table 4). Also, no correlation was found between the Dutch vocabulary grade and the English vocabulary grade ($r = .47, p > .05$; Table 5) in the linguistics group ($n = 8$), nor between the Dutch syntax grade and English syntax grade ($r = .15, p > .05$; Table 6).

Table 2: Bivariate Correlations Dutch Writing vs. English Writing

		Grade Dutch	Grade English
Grade Dutch	Pearson Correlation	1	.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	31	31
Grade English	Pearson Correlation	.456**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	31	31

** , Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1: Scatterplot Bivariate Correlation

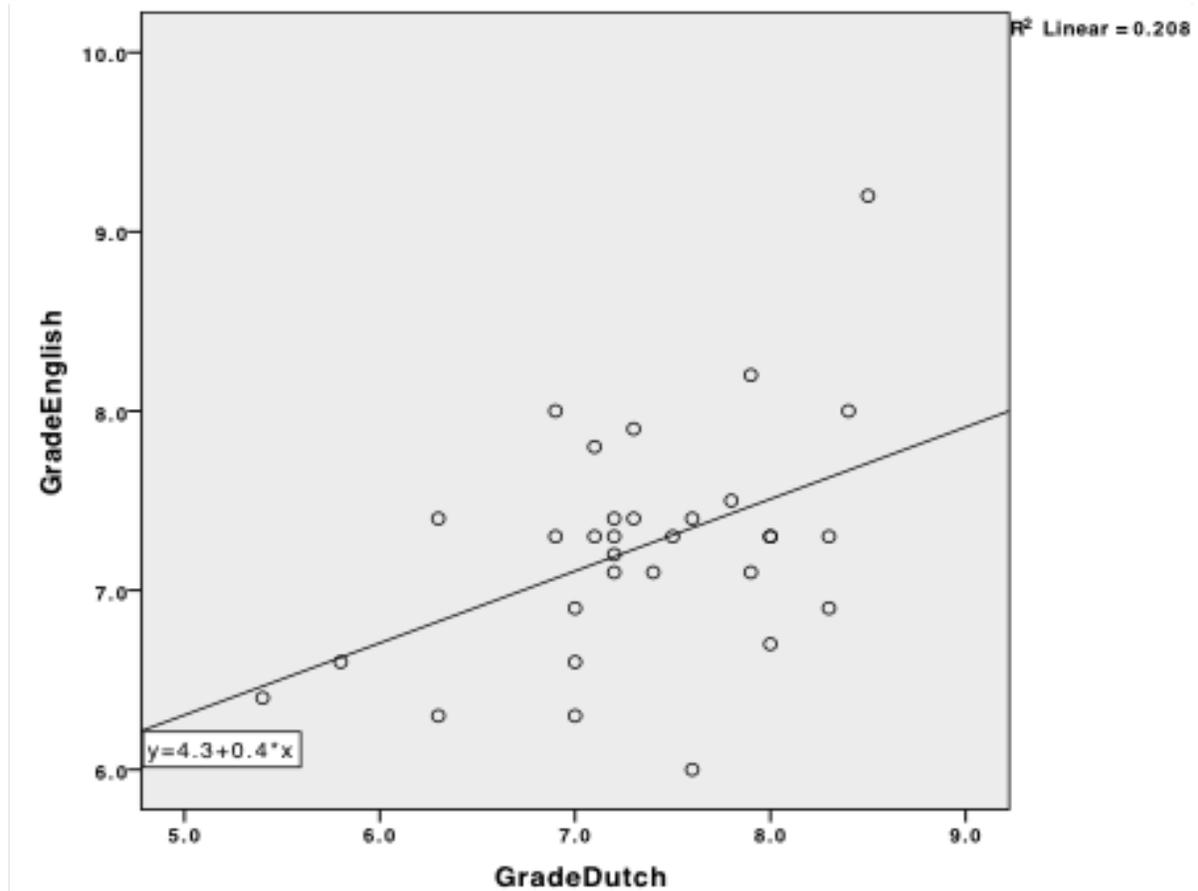


Table 3: Bivariate Correlation of Vocabulary - Literature Students

		Grade Voc Dutch	Grade Voc English
Grade Vocabulary Dutch	Pearson Correlation	1	.386
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.216
	N	12	12
Grade Vocabulary English	Pearson Correlation	.386	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.216	
	N	12	12

Table 4: Bivariate Correlation of Syntax – Literature Students

		Grade Syntax Dutch	Grade Syntax English
Grade Syntax Dutch	Pearson Correlation	1	.231
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.471
	N	12	12
Grade Syntax English	Pearson Correlation	.231	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.471	
	N	12	12

Table 5: Bivariate Correlation of Vocabulary – Linguistic Students

		Grade Dutch	Grade English
Grade Dutch	Pearson Correlation	1	.467
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.243
	N	8	8
Grade English	Pearson Correlation	.467	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.243	
	N	8	8

Table 6: Bivariate Correlation of Syntax - Linguistic Students

		Grade Dutch	Grade English
Grade Dutch	Pearson Correlation	1	.152
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.719
	N	8	8
Grade English	Pearson Correlation	.152	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.719	
	N	8	8

5. Discussion & Concluding Remarks

As predicted, a positive correlation was found between L1 and L2 writing proficiency, which is in line with previous research. The moderate-strong correlation implies that L1 and L2 writing go hand in hand and are partly build on the same foundation. Furthermore, the correlation is evidence for the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, implying that L1 and L2 are closely related due to their shared cognition. However, no correlation was found between L1 and L2 writing proficiency due to the specialisation tracks, expressed in the vocabulary and syntax grades. This finding implies that there is no direct correlation between educational focus on literature or linguistics and writing advantages. The absence of a correlation between specialisation and grades may suggest that the influence of specialisation is not as substantial at an advanced stage as other studies (Myhill, 2012; Jiang, 2011; Janks, 2009; Hirvela, 2004) have suggested.

A multitude of factors may explain the absence of a correlation. Firstly, the bachelor programme English Literature and Culture at Utrecht University has a well-balanced first year programme. Students have a mandatory programme that includes literature and linguistics courses. A total of 30 ECTS, half a year's worth of studying, can be obtained on each subject. All of the participants would therefore have a sufficient amount of knowledge on both subjects and the advantages of one specialisation over the other would be eliminated. Moreover, the specialisation tracks in the second and third year of the English bachelor offer a blended programme. It is habitual for the linguistics track to offer one literature course without any linguistic subject matter. Therefore, a mixture of skills is acquired within the specialisation of the students and thereby the distance between literature and linguistics students may be reduced. Secondly, as the current study was done halfway through the second semester, the second year students may not have had not studied their specialisation long enough. The expected effects could therefore not manifest themselves yet. Thirdly, the participants might have been too advanced students of the English language. Their L2 proficiency may have been too high to find a significant correlation between educational focus and the results, as the educational effect would be eclipsed by L2 proficiency. Fourthly, the questionnaire data indicates that literature students indeed write and read more than linguistics

students. However, we did not conduct any control tests to determine whether linguistics students indeed had better syntactic knowledge than literature students and if students specialised in literature had a larger vocabulary than linguistics students. Such tests should be carried out to validate our assumptions. Lastly, the experimenters who graded the essays did not have much experience in grading essays. They could therefore have graded the papers either too strictly or too leniently. A follow-up study has been planned, in which the essays will be re-graded by experienced university-level teachers, in which the new scores will be analysed to eliminate possible influence of the grading.

Future research could focus on less advanced L2 students. As mentioned, the university students of English could have been too proficient in the L2 to let a correlation between writing proficiency and specialisation surface. It would therefore be good to establish whether the educational effect would surface when the participants would be less proficient. However, adequate L2 proficiency still needs to be ascertained for the threshold to be overcome, allowing transfer to occur. This way, the specialisation would result into more distinct knowledge and skills and would not be eclipsed by a near-native L2 proficiency.

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7. Appendixes

Appendix A

Essay Assignment English

Essay assignment

Dear participant,

Please write a short argumentative essay on the following topic in **English**:

* *The cancellation of study financing for students.*

Your essay should approximately be 500 words long (10% marge) and ought to be well ordered. In other words; short introduction, arguments for or against, and a small conclusion.

Put your studentnumber, year and “verdiepingspakket” above the assignment. Please name your file as follows:

Studentnumber_E1_EN_Year(1/2/3)_V(1/2/3/4).docx

V =

1 = Cultural Encounters

2= History, Genre & Identity

3= Translation, Adaptation, Creation (Intertextuality)

4= Theories of English

Good luck!

Appendix B

Essay Assignment Dutch

Essay opdracht

Beste deelnemer,

Schrijf een kort betoog over het volgende onderwerp in het **Nederlands**:

** Het afschaffen van de studiefinanciering.*

Het betoog wordt geacht ongeveer 500 woorden lang te zijn (marge van 10%) en moet voorzien zijn van een duidelijke structuur. Met andere woorden; een korte inleiding, argumenten voor of tegen en een korte conclusie.

Vergeet niet om je studentnummer, jaar en verdiepinspakket te vermelden boven je essay. Noem je document als volgt:

Studentnummer_E1_NL_Jaar(1/2/3)_V(1/2/3/4).docx

V =

1 = Cultural Encounters

2= History, Genre & Identity

3= Translation, Adaptation, Creation (Intertextuality)

4= Theories of English

Veel succes!

Appendix C

Self-Assessment Form

Self Assessment Task English Department

Voor het analyseren van de resultaten hebben we van jullie wat extra informatie nodig. Daarom verzoeken we jullie deze vragen na het schrijven van het essay in te vullen. Het studentnummer gebruiken we alleen zodat we de antwoorden van bepaalde vragen kunnen relateren aan jullie essay.

Ik ben

- Man
- Vrouw

Mijn leeftijd is: ____

Mijn studentnummer is: _____

Ik ben

- Eerstejaars Bachelor Engelse Taal en Cultuur.
- Tweedejaars Bachelor Engelse Taal en Cultuur.
- Derdejaars of hoger Bachelor Engelse Taal en Cultuur.

Indien je een tweede opleiding volgt, geef deze dan hier aan: _____

Mijn vooropleiding is

- Middelbare school VWO
- Middelbare school HAVO + HBO/HBO propedeuse
- Anders, namelijk: _____

Ik spreek de volgende talen

- Nederlands
- Duits
- Engels
- Frans
- Anders, namelijk: _____

Hoeveel jaar leer je al Engels?

- 1-2 jaar
- 2-3 jaar

- 3-4 jaar
- 4-5 jaar
- 5-6 jaar
- Langer, namelijk: _____

Als je een tijd in het buitenland hebt gewoond, gewerkt of gestudeerd, geef dan hieronder aan waar dat was en voor hoe lang

Ik heb het volgende verdiepingspakket gekozen of ga volgend jaar dit verdiepingspakket volgen:

- Theories of English
- History, Genre, Identity: English Language and Literature in Context
- Translation, Adaptation, Creation.
- Cultural Encounters.

De volgende vragen hebben betrekking op je lees- en schrijfvaardigheid in je L1 (Nederlands) en L2 (Engels).

1. In mijn moedertaal lees ik gemiddeld naast mijn studieboeken:

(alle boeken die voor studie gelezen moeten worden tellen niet mee!).

- Meer dan 6 boeken per maand in het Nederlands.
- 3 tot 6 boeken per maand in het Nederlands.
- 1 tot 3 boek(en) per maand in het Nederlands.
- Ik lees nooit boeken in het Nederlands, alleen als het moet.

2. In mijn tweede taal lees ik gemiddeld:

(alle boeken die voor studie gelezen moeten worden tellen niet mee!).

- Meer dan 6 boeken per maand in het Engels.
- 3 tot 6 boeken per maand in het Engels.
- 1 tot 3 boek(en) per maand in het Engels.
- Ik lees nooit boeken in het Engels, alleen als het moet.

3. Lezen in mijn moedertaal

- Vind ik een verplichting aangezien ik een taal studeer.
- Vind ik noodzakelijk omdat ik mijn leesvaardigheid moet verbeteren

- Vind ik leuk om te doen in mijn vrije tijd; het geeft me rust.
- Vind ik vervelend en saai en lees daarom ook alleen als ik iets moet lezen.
- Vind ik verschrikkelijk; ik lees ook niet als het moet.

4. Lezen in mijn tweede taal

- Vind ik een verplichting aangezien ik een taal studeer.
- Vind ik noodzakelijk omdat ik mijn leesvaardigheid moet verbeteren
- Vind ik leuk om te doen in mijn vrije tijd; het geeft me rust.
- Vind ik vervelend en saai en lees daarom ook alleen als ik iets moet lezen.
- Vind ik verschrikkelijk; ik lees ook niet als het moet.

5. Als ik mezelf een cijfer zou moeten geven voor mijn leesvaardigheid in mijn moedertaal, dan zou ik mezelf het volgende cijfer geven:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

6. Als ik mezelf een cijfer zou moeten geven voor mijn leesvaardigheid in mijn tweede taal, dan zou ik mezelf het volgende cijfer geven:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

5. Op een schaal van 1 tot 5, hoeveel plezier haal je dan uit het lezen?

- 1 ik lees niet graag.
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 ik lees erg graag.

6. Ik schrijf gemiddeld in mijn moedertaal:

- Meer dan 25 uur per week.
- Tussen 15 en 25 uur per week.
- Tussen 5 en 15 uur per week.
- Minder dan 5 uur per week.

7. Ik schrijf gemiddeld in mijn tweede taal (Engels):

- Meer dan 25 uur per week.
- Tussen 15 en 25 uur per week.
- Tussen 5 en 15 uur per week.
- Minder dan 5 uur per week.

8. Als ik een essay moet schrijven in mijn tweede taal

- Dan schrijf ik hem eerst in het Nederlands en vertaal hem daarna naar het Engels.
- Dan schrijf ik hem in een mix van Nederlands en Engels en vertaal daarna de Nederlandse stukken naar het Engels
- Dan schrijf ik hem gelijk in het Engels.

9. Bij het schrijven van een tekst of essay in mijn tweede taal

- Gaat het snel en automatisch en hoef ik bijna niet na te denken wat ik wil zeggen. Bovendien denk ik ook in mijn tweede taal.
- Gaat het snel en automatisch, maar denk ik regelmatig nog in het Nederlands als ik naar woorden zoek.
- Gaat het langzaam en niet automatisch, ik denk in het Nederlands en moet regelmatig woorden opzoeken in een woordenboek of online.
- Gaat het langzaam en niet automatisch, ik krijg vaak niet veel op papier en doe er lang over.

10. Na of tijdens het schrijven van mijn essay

- Kijk ik nooit terug naar mijn tekst, ik blijf meestal bij mijn eerste poging.
- Kijk ik af en toe terug en verbeter kleine stukjes.
- Kijk ik vaak terug en schrapping en verbeter stukken tekst.
- Kijk ik altijd terug naar mijn tekst en laat ook vaak anderen mijn tekst lezen.

12. Als ik mezelf een cijfer zou moeten geven voor mijn schrijfvaardigheid in L1 (Nederlands), dan zou ik mezelf het volgende cijfer geven:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

13. Als ik mezelf een cijfer zou moeten geven voor mijn schrijfvaardigheid in L2 (Engels), dan zou ik mezelf het volgende cijfer geven:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

14. Op een schaal van 1 tot 5, hoeveel plezier haal je dan uit het schrijven van teksten?

- 1 ik schrijf niet graag.
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 ik schrijf erg graag.

15. Ik wist genoeg van het onderwerp af om er over te schrijven.

- 1. Ik wist te weinig
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5. Ik had voldoende kennis

Onderwerp evaluatie:

** Het afschaffen van de studiefinanciering.*

0 niet leuk 0 gaat wel 0 neutraal 0 best leuk 0 leuk

Appendix D

Confidentiality & Subject Payment Form

Verklaring

Door het ondertekenen van dit formulier verklaar ik alle informatie die ik bij deze test heb opgedaan, zoals vragen en het essay thema, geheim te houden. Ik zal hierover niet met mijn medestudenten praten.

Studentnummer: _____

Datum: _____

Handtekening:



Universiteit Utrecht

Appendix E

CEFR Adaptation (Example)

Europees Referentie Kader

Woordenschat

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
De schrijver beschikt over een beperkte woordenschat. De gebruikte woorden hebben betrekking op de schrijver zelf en op specifieke, concrete situaties.	De schrijver maakt gebruik van standaarduitdrukking en om zich in eenvoudige, alledaagse situaties uit te kunnen drukken. Er is weinig variatie in het woordgebruik. De tekstsoort heeft betrekking op vertrouwde situaties en onderwerpen.	De schrijver beschikt over de meest noodzakelijke vocabulaire om zichzelf m.b.t. bekende en alledaagse thema's uit te drukken, al kunnen er grove fouten in het gebruik van idiomatische uitdrukkingen optreden. De schrijver maakt gebruik van omschrijvingen om hiaten in de woordkennis op te vangen.	De schrijver heeft een brede woordenschat om duidelijk stelling te nemen over bekende en algemene onderwerpen. De schrijver kan zich over het algemeen bondig uitdrukken, zonder omslachtige zinnen te gebruiken om <i>to the point</i> te komen. Er worden een aantal fouten in het gebruik van idiomatische uitdrukkingen en betekenisconnotaties gemaakt, maar dit staat de begrijpelijkheid niet in de weg. Bovendien kan de schrijver variatie inbrengen om te veel herhaling te voorkomen.	De schrijver beschikt over een brede woordenschat, die hem/haar erbij helpen om zichzelf duidelijk uit te drukken, passend bij de tekstsoort en het publiek. De schrijver hoeft geen omslachtige formuleringen te gebruiken om zichzelf uit te drukken en kan direct <i>to the point</i> komen. Er is in geringe mate sprake van het zichtbaar zoeken naar uitdrukkingen. Er worden geen storende fouten in het gebruik van idiomatische uitdrukkingen en betekenisconnotaties gemaakt.	Er is sprake van veel variatie in het woordgebruik. De schrijver gebruikt verschillende idiomatische uitdrukkingen om hetzelfde concept te beschrijven, weet nuances te leggen en maakt geen fouten in het gebruik van idiomatische uitdrukkingen. De schrijver toont zich bewust van betekenisconnotaties.					

Appendix F**Dutch Example Essay**

Tot twee jaar geleden behoorde het Nederlandse studeersysteem tot één van de royaalste in de wereld. Indien studenten binnen tien jaar een diploma haalden werden de kosten die zij gemaakt hadden tijdens hun studie, tot een maximum van de nominale studieduur plus één jaar, volledig vergoed. Hierbij inbegrepen was het collegegeld, maar ook overige kosten als vervoer (in de vorm van gratis onbeperkt reizen met het OV gedurende de studie) werden vergoed, en zelfs extra tegemoetkomingen voor thuiswonenden hoorden tot de bonussen waarop studenten konden rekenen. De invoering van het nieuwe systeem, dat voornamelijk berust op leningen, heeft een grote hoeveelheid klachten en protesten teweeg gebracht. Echter zijn de veranderingen noodzakelijk geweest voor het tegemoetkomen van het begrotingstekort, en kan gesteld worden dat het nieuwe systeem eerlijk is.

De voornaamste zorg van de oppositie was dat de afschaffing van de basisbeurs potentiële nieuwe studenten ervan zou weerhouden te gaan studeren. Het is door de verandering immers vrijwel onmogelijk gemaakt een studie af te ronden zonder na afloop met tienduizenden euro's schuld de arbeidsmarkt op te gaan, wat voor sommigen een barrière zou kunnen zijn. Echter blijkt uit de eerste cijfers dat dit niet het geval is. De hoeveelheid eerstejaars studenten is in de eerste jaren na de invoering niet significant omlaag gegaan; sterker nog, het dit aantal groeit nog altijd (alhoewel minder sterk). Ook moet in acht worden genomen dat wanneer een aantal jong volwassenen door de veranderingen besluit niet te gaan studeren, dit niet automatisch een slechte zaak is. Het aantal academisch geschoolden in Nederland is relatief hoog, wat er momenteel onder andere voor zorgt dat zij moeilijk aan een baan op niveau kunnen komen. Mocht een groter deel van de bevolking zich uiteindelijk weerhouden voelen door het leenstelsel, en hierdoor besluiten een praktische opleiding te volgen in plaats van te gaan studeren, zou dit geen slechte ontwikkeling zijn.

Ook moet gedacht worden aan de staatsbegroting. Door de financiële tegenslagen van de afgelopen jaren was het simpelweg nodig grote bezuinigingen door te voeren om het land draaiende te houden. Veel tegenstanders van het leenstelsel vergeten vaak dat de afschaffing niet teweeg is gebracht

om hen te treiteren of om hun academische belang te bagatalliseren, maar uit pure noodzaak. Er had op andere vlakken bezuinigd kunnen worden, zoals op werkloosheids- en –ouderdomsuitkeringen, maar dit zou uiteindelijk net zo goed gevolgen hebben voor studenten (binnen een aantal jaar/decennia).

Laat het duidelijk zijn dat wanneer bezuinigingen ingevoerd moeten worden, niet iedere bevolkingsgroep tevreden gehouden kan worden. Iedere euro aan overheidsuitgaven die niet dusdanig verdeeld wordt dat ieder individu er maximaal profijt van heeft geeft reden tot protest vanuit het kamp van de benadeelden. Het jammere feit blijft dat de Nederlander van vandaag niet meer weet hoe om te gaan met verlies, maar dat er in iedere wedstrijd altijd een verliezer moet zijn.

Appendix G

English Example Essay

Students and the Greed of the Government

Recently, the Dutch government has changed rules regarding study financing for students. Before the new rules were implemented, students received a certain amount of money (around 100 euro and upwards) each month to help finance their university courses. If the students finished a bachelor's degree, that money would be deemed a gift. If, however, they failed to complete a bachelor's degree within 10 years from starting, they would have to pay the money back to the government since it would then count as a loan. With the new system the same amount of money will still be available to students but will simply be a loan. Given the recent economic crisis and the enormous state debts, it makes sense that certain cuts need to be made and as a government you would not want to fund students who do not take their studies all that seriously. However, this is not the way to do it since motivated students are duped by this system as well.

By making the students more fiscally responsible for their own (university) careers, some students may be more motivated to not waste time (and money). Ultimately, this could be a good thing for some and not a problem for others who know exactly what they want. In comparison with the students benefiting from the old system, these students will have it a little less easy. However, the borrowed money might be easily paid off, based on a university level job. Also, if things do not work out exactly the way things were planned, the students will have thirty years to pay off their debts which means that they would have to pay hardly anything on a monthly basis.

However, there are students who may not know very well what they want, or students who thought they knew what they wanted but it turns out they were wrong. These students will now have to pay more money back since they made the wrong decision. Furthermore, there are students who have a hard time financing their university careers as it is and the new system could make this much harder.

On top of this, going to university requires roughly the time of a full time job each week. Having to work a part time job on the side can be a major cause of stress and fatigue among students. With the new system, students would be forced to earn at least a hundred euros more than the students of the old system to be on equal grounds. This means that would roughly have to work 10 hours more each month, which may not be that easy.

Ultimately, the new system can be good for some, but worse for others. There will be students unable to study simply because of the money or because they might be too afraid to make the wrong choice. It makes sense that the government would want to spend less money on students who take a long time or ultimately achieve nothing. The solution to this problem, however, is not to spend less in general but instead to make the system more competitive. Students with good grades and a drive to do well should be rewarded. The best way to achieve this, is for Dutch universities to try to properly compete with universities around the globe.