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ABSTRACT

This exposition analyses the development of the creative writing skills of a twelve-year old, male migrant child enrolled in a Community Outreach Program undertaken by the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's campus, Trinidad. It delves into the effectiveness of employing creative writing as a tool in the context of learning English as a second language. Throughout this study qualitative research was conducted by obtaining writing assignments done by the migrant child over a six-week period. The pieces were analysed and compared to the descriptors for the Beginner A1 level of the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR). This comparative benchmark was derived from one of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago's prerequisites for enrolment of migrant/refugee children into the local school system. The primary and secondary findings showed that creative writing assignments in the second language (L2) were more effective when they were first done in the native or first language (L1). The child also identified some of the challenges faced in this process such as confusion between L2 and L1, different routes of development between L2 and L1, contextual variation in L2 and the lack of practice opportunity. In addition to these challenges, the roles of motivation and anxiety were discussed in relation to language learning. This study proposes the use of creative writing as an effective tool for L2 learning as supported by both primary and secondary findings.

Keywords: L1, L2, language learning, second language acquisition, creative writing

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INTRODUCTION

According to Bonyan Organisation¹, when we as a society do not allow children the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge, we have not let them down, but we have failed ourselves as a country. By facilitating the educational opportunities of migrant/refugee² children, this can foster a cycle whereby after education, they contribute to the economy just as our own citizens, fuelling the development of a healthy economy and an all-rounded society in Trinidad and Tobago.

The focus on creative writing in this study stems from Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Education's requirement for migrant/refugee children to pass an English assessment in order to enter the schooling system, (Ragoonath, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian). In an effort to facilitate enrolment, migrant children must have an A1³ level on the English Language Assessment. This A1 level is derived from the standards set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In addition to this level of English proficiency, the child must have a government-issued student permit, the necessary vaccination records for school enrolment, and the parents' or guardians' government registration from the 2019 migrant registration period, (Lindo, Trinidad and Tobago Newsday). If children do not meet these requirements, they can remain enrolled in non-formal education until they are capable of satisfying the aforementioned prerequisites.

¹ Bonyan Organisation, a leading NGO focused on rebuilding and revitalising war-impacted communities in the Middle East and Africa, advocating for quality education, and fostering community growth.

² A migrant is someone who chooses to move, not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives through work opportunities, education, family reunification or other reasons. Whereas a refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return.

³ A1 is a beginner level of English, synonymous to the individual being able to introduce themselves and others, use familiar everyday expressions, basic phrases, and ask and answer questions about personal details.

Whilst these requirements exist, there has been no initiative to distinguish if there will be different methods of assessment for children of various ages or what will guide secondary school-aged children to enter a school, will they have to write a Secondary Education Assessment (SEA) examination? All of these are vital concerns that have not been answered. Therefore, the temporary solution is to engage migrant/refugee children in some form of education with the aim of increasing their English proficiency, even if it is through informal education.

An aspect of this informal education is creative writing, the element being assessed in this paper. Creative Writing (CW) is defined as any type of writing that uses imaginative literary or poetic techniques to support fiction or nonfiction writing, (Willson 1). It involves original composition, invention, expressiveness and the incorporation of the imagination of the individual author. Creative writing has been selected as it incorporates several elements of a language simultaneously, allowing the student's proficiency to be properly and accurately developed and assessed.

This study is justifiable as it wishes to enhance documentation by exploring the effectiveness of creative writing lessons on the English skills of a Spanish speaking migrant child in Trinidad. Within the context of Trinidad and Tobago's education system, creative writing is pivotal in the second language acquisition process of a migrant child, to aid in their enrolment into the formal education system.

The research being presented in this paper is based on information gathered from a total of ten sessions, six were face-to-face and four were online, over a period of six weeks with one twelve-year-old migrant child. These sessions were conducted within the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus' 'Community Outreach Program' based in Trinidad, and as aforementioned the focus of the study is on one element of language learning, creative writing. This work intends to assess the development of creative writing skills of a migrant child and report on how creative writing has impacted their English capabilities. It is important to understand whilst the focus is on creative writing, the bigger picture revolves around migrant/refugee children gaining access to the formal education system of Trinidad and Tobago. In order to track the progress made over the six-week period, writing pieces were assessed based on the characteristics of the Beginner A1 level of the CEFR, as this is a requirement for enrolment. The main research method applied was qualitative research, as the information presented was based on the collection and analysis of the writing pieces over the allotted time period.

This paper consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 entitled, "*An Analysis of the Child's Writing in L1 and L2*," which focuses on the quality of work produced by the student in various writing assignments, particularly a comparison between work that has been done firstly in L1⁴ before employing L2⁵ as opposed to writing pieces done solely in L2. Chapter 2, "*The Progress Report: Assessing Three Creative Writing Assignments*," further analyses work done by the student particularly by drawing references to characteristics of the Beginner A1 level of the CEFR.

⁴ L1 refers to the individual's first or native language or dialect that a person has been exposed to from birth.

⁵ L2 refers to any second language the individual learns acquisition (SLA), sometimes called second-language learning, otherwise referred to as L2 (language 2) acquisition, is the process by which people learn a second language.

Chapter 3, *“Influential Factors and Challenges Encountered,”* highlights some of the general challenges faced in the creative writing process and generally in second language learning through a comparison of primary and secondary findings, and Chapter 4, *“Conclusion,”* summarises all the findings of this study and provides insight to some of the limitations experienced along with possible areas for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to highlight the need for creative writing lessons for migrant/refugee children to facilitate their enrolment into the formal education system of Trinidad and Tobago. Presently, migrant/refugee children do not have the opportunity to enter the education system mainly because they lack English proficiency, as stated by Kamilah Morain in a podcast hosted by the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF). Therefore, in understanding that these children do not have access to a formal education, creative writing is seen as a tool to improve their English proficiency, so as to guarantee their entry into the local schools. Creative writing is often overlooked with regards to its importance. However, as highlighted by Berro, Smith, and Küçükali respectively, creative writing does play an integral role in second language acquisition and it aids in the development of confidence and emotionality in speaking and writing in L2. This process is not without difficulties which is underlined by Fadillah in the final article of this literature review, who pays particular attention to the number of factors that influence second language acquisition.

The lack of education opportunities for migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago.

A transcript of a podcast, hosted by Deanna Johnson, program coordinator on the migration team from the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), who interviewed Kamilah Morain, the Deputy Director for the foundation's Trinidad and Tobago office, concluded that there are no policies to accommodate migrant/refugee children into the local education system and long term goals geared towards full integration must be implemented. Morain stated that migrant children face tremendous challenges to gaining access to educational opportunities, "in countries where there is not a targeted policy that seeks to include them in the education system there, or does not

address their specific needs,” (1). Trinidad and Tobago happens to be one of these countries where there are no permanent policies to ensure the integration and inclusion of migrant/refugee children into the education system. In Trinidad and Tobago these children must have a student permit which is dependent on the Ministry of National Security. However, to date of this podcast (March 09 2022) there have been reports of 4,000 children that are of school age and unable to participate in the local education system (Morain 1). According to Morain, of the 4,000 children, approximately 40% of this group has not been in a school environment for 2 years and counting (1). Consequently, this has a negative influence on their learning outcomes and capacity to perform academically, and it severely limits their future prospects to earn income and lead decent lives, as well as increasing their risk of remaining in poverty. Various stakeholders such as PADF, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela Solidarity Network (TTVSOLNET), The Living Waters Community and The University of the West Indies (UWI) have undertaken initiatives to provide some level of inclusion, however nothing permanent has been addressed or decided upon to this date.

PADF has also worked extensively with the University of the West Indies, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) to develop an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum that is aligned to the national primary school curriculum of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the first of its kind in the Caribbean targeting children ages 5-11. The curriculum was piloted with 30 teachers who were trained on how to teach the national primary school curriculum content to children who did not speak English as their first language (Morain 2). A workbook was also developed to support Spanish speaking children's learning of English (Morain 2). Similarly, the UWI has undergone a community engagement pilot project of tutoring

migrant/refugee children to provide them with some exposure to an education in Trinidad and a level of proficiency in the English language, so as to guide their entry into the local education system. Despite these initiatives, there is still the need for the development and implementation of a long term goal of full inclusion of migrant/refugee children into the education system. Therefore, it is of great importance that whilst piloting these temporary initiatives, work is done to ensure their gradual enrolment into local schools to better prepare them for assimilation into Trinidad and Tobago's society.

The successful role of creative writing in second language acquisition.

Berro states that creative writing is an exemplary approach that facilitates the development of language proficiency (1). Creative writing is “a good vehicle for improving students’ proficiency in English,” (Berro 12). A study conducted by Dai in 2010 concluded that language proficiency is attained by the new vocabulary acquired in creative writing activities (Berro 2). Students in this study felt that with these activities they learnt how to better express themselves. As previously mentioned, creative writing is any type of writing that uses imaginative, literary or poetic techniques to support fiction or nonfiction writing (Willson 1), and it proves to be beneficial to students as it “involves de-contextualizing literature, which later includes writing their own version or free writing a text that relates to the original content, and context,” (Berro 3). According to this study, it is evident that CW enhances language proficiency as students can freely express themselves, signifying that they are exposed to the learning of a wide range of vocabulary which they can now adapt and apply in order to interact in an appropriate and suitable manner. This research concludes that CW is a valuable instrument for teachers to boost student engagement and vocabulary acquisition for ESL learners. Therefore, vocabulary gained

through creative writing exercises is important in developing language competency since students are exposed to new vocabulary that they can subsequently utilise in practical applications to increase their confidence in their respective L2.

The role of emotionality in creative writing and second language acquisition.

Creative writing activities play a pivotal role in developing confidence and emotionality⁶ for L2 application (Smith 2). This article challenged the presumption that creative writing lacks relevance in a school curriculum, specifically the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum. As English L2 learners progress beyond the beginner stage of acquisition, their creative use of language, particularly in literary writing, may aid in certain aspects of language acquisition such as grammar, vocabulary and it also address issues of communicative competence⁷. The article has emphasised that by allowing students the creative freedom to write independently and candidly through poetry and fiction instead of the restrictive and regulated nature of academic writing, they are more likely to develop communicative competence through the emotionality that is encouraged in creative writing.

For example, poetry gives students a stable vehicle whereby they can express themselves in the foreign language. Smith highlighted the significance of allowing students to develop and include emotional aspects when writing in L2, as a means to increase their language proficiency (13). An example of a poetry exercise was given as seen in Fig.1 and Fig.2 (Smith 13). Conclusions were that because students had the creative freedom to explore and develop their responses, they became highly engaged in L2 learning. Whilst these exercises provide guidelines as seen in

⁶ Emotionality in writing deals with the ability of the writer to provoke an emotional reaction within the audience.

⁷ Communicative competence is the ability to achieve communicative goals in a socially accepted manner.

Fig.1, they do not limit the students' creative expression, allowing them to develop a wider range of vocabulary that encapsulates all aspects of their imagination as seen in Fig.2. This adds to their ability to effectively communicate as they learn new words.

Line 1: First name	And here is one of the results, by three children
Line 2: Four traits that describe the character	(Karla, Moses and Joel) aged 15-16
Line 3: Relative of _____ (brother, sister, daughter etc.)	<i>Rose</i>
Line 4: Lover of _____ (list three people, things or ideas)	<i>Colorful, aromatic, pretty</i>
Line 5: Who feels (three emotions)	<i>Sister to gardenias, sunflowers, and daisies</i>
Line 6: Who needs (three items)	<i>Lover of parties, weddings and dates</i>
Line 7: Who fears (three items)	<i>Who feels warm in the sun, hurt when cut, and satisfied when it rains</i>
Line 8: Who gives (three items)	<i>Who needs water, sun, and dirt</i>
Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three items)	<i>Who fears drought, chemicals and scissors</i>
Line 10: Resident of _____	<i>Who gives love, happiness, and peace</i>
Line 11: Last name	<i>Who would like to see all people happy</i>
	<i>Resident of beautiful gardens</i>
	<i>Linda</i>
	(Holmes and Moulton, 2001, p. 52)

Fig. 1 illustrating a poetry guide

Fig. 2 illustrating a student's response

This study also highlighted the role of fiction by comparing the concepts of core and non-core vocabulary words. "Core words are, 'neutral', or 'unmarked' – eat, big, door etc., and act as universal substitutes for their non-core synonyms. Non-core words carry nuances, extra meanings – 'guzzle, ginormous, portal.' Why would a student use the word 'furious' when the simple circumlocution 'very angry' is available?" (Smith 14). According to Smith, attempting fiction, whereby the aesthetic quality of writing is emphasised, provides an excellent setting for non-core vocabulary study (14). It encourages heightened cognitive awareness through the study of non-core vocabulary. The nuance in word choice becomes important when emphasis is placed on the emotional impact rather than the simple semantic message. Fig. 3 shows an example of an

exercise used to generate non-core vocabulary. The results from this show students' sensitivity to getting the “right” word seems to increase, leading them to investigate synonyms and increase their non-core vocabulary. Smith has found that the vocabulary used in creative writing appears to be more varied and of higher quality than academic writing produced by the same students (15).

<i>Answer the following questions – use your imagination!</i>
1. John stared at Peter. Why? <u>Peter had walked into the room wearing a gorilla costume.</u>
2. Peter gazed at Catherine. Why? _____ _____
3. Catherine glared at Sophie. Why? _____ _____
4. Stephen glanced at Helen. Why? _____ _____
5. Helen frowned at Susan. Why? _____ _____
6. Susan smiled at John. Why? _____ _____

Fig. 3 illustrating worksheet used to raise student awareness of non-core words

Creative writing is an essentiality in developing L2 proficiency.

The research done by Tütüniş and Küçükali assessed the impact of creative writing on student's ESL acquisition and proficiency development. The study ultimately proved to be successful, concluding there is a positive impact of creative writing on developing L2 proficiency. When learning any foreign language, writing becomes a skill which needs to be developed for full proficiency, (Tütüniş 82). In addition to this, students must master the ability to offer opinions on virtually any kind of issue that they may encounter in their lifetime (Tütüniş 85). A system that encourages students to practise creative writing in both L1 and L2 would allow them to discover their own linguistic abilities and get satisfaction from creative writing because it allows them to free their imaginations.

Students can use their linguistic abilities in CW to explore more deeply and extensively than they can in oral expression, and to convey more personal feelings and mental images. Tütüniş and Küçükali mentioned a small scale classroom research conducted at the English Preparatory School of Maritime University with the aim of finding an answer to the question “Can we improve our students’ writing skills in English if we apply creative writing techniques as a classroom process?” concluded that students made progress in their creative writing abilities and their attitudes toward the subject positively changed by the end of the school term (85). Fig. 4 illustrates the guide given to students for when they were writing their pieces. The topics assigned which were taken from this guide facilitated the creativity of students and allowed them to write freely in both L1 and L2.

TOPIC (BOOK) The Writing Syllabus:	CREATIVE, CULTURAL and GLOBAL ISSUES	EXTRA TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
Describing Appearances	Art / Painting	'The Portrait of Mona Lisa'	Famous Actor / Actress
Describing Places	Art / Painting	Van Gogh's Room	Pink Saloon in Dolmabahçe Palace
Describing Objects	History / Tradition	Turkish Fez	Free Writing
Organizing Information by Order of Importance	Global Issues Social Issues	Natural Resources (Article from reading course)	Important Things in Marriages
Expressing an Opinion	Art / History Social Issues	Renaissance Period	Friendship Websites
Comparing	Fiction / Poetry	Writing a Poem	Similarities of Poetry & Prose
Contrasting	Social / Global Issues Literature	Women in East / Women in West	Graded Readers (Plays, Fiction, Short Story)
Writing Summaries	Literature (Short Story)	Captain Murderer by Charles Dickens	Graded Readers
Cause	Social Issues	Poverty	Free Writing
Effect	Social / Global Issues	Earthquake	Divorce

Fig. 4 illustrating a creative writing guide given to students

The Challenges encountered in the second language acquisition process.

Fadillah conclusively stated that the L2 learner experiences a series of challenges. There are several internal and external factors that influence whether the L2 process is successful or not. The internal factors include: the role of the first language, the natural route of development, contextual variation in L2, individual learner differences, the role of input, and the role of formal instruction, with the role of the teacher being examined as an external factor (100-107), and attention given to the role of anxiety in language learning.

Internal factors:

1. The role of the first language

The similarities and differences between L1 and L2 can make acquisition either easy or difficult. If L1 and L2 are similar, L1 can actively aid L2 acquisition, whereas if L1 and L2 are contrastingly different, this presents problems in L2 acquisition (Fadillah 100). When L1 and L2 are similar, L2 learning is facilitated by its similarities with L1, this is known as positive transfer. On the other hand, negative transfer or interference occurs when faults in the acquisition or use of L2 are caused by the impact of L1.

2. The natural route of development

Fadillah states that L2 learning and acquisition can be facilitated if the learner employs similar strategies in their L2 learning as during their L1 learning (100). Fadillah explored whether the route of development in L1 reflects the same route in L2, and they defined it as the L2=L1 hypothesis. This states that the processes of second language acquisition and first language acquisition are very similar as a result of the strategies employed by the learner (Fadillah 101). Therefore, if the learner employs similar strategies in learning L2 as they did in L1, Fadillah concludes that transfer is positive and facilitated, making acquisition easier (101).

3. Contextual variation in L2

It is uncommon for students to make the same mistakes in multiple contexts, a mistake may be made in one context but not in another (Fadillah 102). Fadillah gave particular attention to situational and linguistic contexts. Situational context refers to when the learner produces a variety of errors in different situations because they do not monitor the output such as in daily

conversations (Fadillah 102). Linguistic context is where one type of error is produced in one sentence but not in another. This is also closely linked with negative transfer of L2. That is, the influence of L1 leads to errors in L2, however, these errors do not always occur in the same context every time.

4. Individual learner differences

Individual learner differences refer to the various capabilities of the learner and whether or not they use these abilities to aid their L2 development. Fadillah highlighted several differences namely, age, aptitude, motivation and needs, and personality and cognitive style (103).

- I. Age - Children and adults vary in several parts of the acquisition process such as speed of acquisition, phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Therefore, the overall acquisition process may be affected based on the age of the learner. However, it remains difficult to definitively conclude whether children or adults are better L2 learners as each age group has its strengths.
- II. Aptitude - Aptitude is the learner's innate ability or potential to learn a new language. This natural potential of the learner is usually determined by aptitude tests which can predict the level of expected success. If the learner has a high aptitude, acquisition is easier than if the learner has a low aptitude (Fadillah 103).
- III. Motivation and needs – Learners who have high motivation and needs in learning L2 will be more successful than those who have low motivation and needs (Fadillah 104). A socio-affective filter in the learner controls the amount of information that reaches the language processing systems. A student can be either receptive or resistant to a second language depending on their attitudes, emotional

states, and conscious or unconscious motives or needs (Fadillah 104). There is the possibility that once learners have obtained sufficient second language knowledge to meet their communicative and emotional needs, they stop learning.

- IV. Personality and cognitive style - Fadillah has stated that despite the many questions raised on whether the student's personality affects their ability to learn a new language and overall success in L2, there has been no definite answer due to the complexity of the issue. However, it still remains an area of importance.

5. The role of input

Fadillah states that a student cannot successfully acquire L2 without input (104). This input can be derived from formal education and exposure to real-world situations. It can be written or spoken. However, if it is not present L2 acquisition can fail.

6. The role of formal instruction

Formal instruction describes classroom instruction and its impact on L2 learning. Formal instruction takes various forms, some of which will effectively impact L2 development while others will not. In certain contexts, formal education might improve performance, but not in others. Despite this, formal training does manage to expedite the learning and acquisition of a second language and it enables learners to master the language more quickly than those who do not engage in any sort of formal instruction (Fadillah 106).

External factor:

1. The role of the teacher

The teacher as the transmitter and facilitator can influence the learner's motivation and motivation correlates with achievement. It is assumed that learners with high motivation will acquire L2 better than learners with low motivation. Fadillah cited Wilkenson who believed teachers should judge their success by the success of their students. Teachers were perceived by students as having the prime responsibility for their interest or boredom (108). Therefore, the teacher has the role of increasing the learner's motivation in order to achieve success in L2 learning and acquisition (Fadillah 109).

The Role of Anxiety in Second Language Learning and Acquisition

Anxiety plays an important role in determining students' success or failure in foreign language classes (Fadillah 110). Fadillah quotes Wörde who states that anxiety could impede foreign language accomplishments (110). In L2 learning, language anxiety can hinder the process of acquiring, retaining, and applying knowledge. There is a negative correlation between students' anxiety and students' achievement in a foreign language. That is, students with high anxiety will gain low achievement; on the contrary, students with low anxiety will gain high achievement.

CHAPTER ONE

An Analysis of the Child's Writing in L1 and L2

As mentioned previously, migrant/refugee children require the CEFR's Beginner A1 level of English to enrol into T&T's education system. All studies in the literature review support the notion that creative writing is an excellent way for students to develop their abilities, confidence and overall proficiency in L2. The ultimate goal here is to highlight creative writing as an indispensable factor in L2 development. CW has been employed in the UWI's Community Engagement Programme as a means to measure the current capabilities of migrant/refugee children in the English language and to help them to improve and further their English capacity.

When writing in L2, L1 plays an integral role, that is, brainstorming and organising ideas in L1 and then writing in L2 (Yigzaw 12-13). This allows the construction of well written, well-organised pieces in L2 that contain a level of emotionality and veracity, as opposed to a limited, unstimulating piece lacking in vocabulary and expression, evident if the piece is written only in L2, and particularly if the writer has a low proficiency in the respective L2.

The writing pieces presented in this chapter were assessed based on a comparison between the pieces done in L1 and L2 writing and those with solely L2 writing.

The first topic given to the student was, "*A day in the life of your best friend*," as seen in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6. This activity was conducted during class time and the child was asked to first write their response in L1, Spanish, before writing in L2, English. The application of L1 first, allows the child to generate, organise, and present ideas in a strategic manner. Yigzaw experimented on

the effectiveness of L1 in L2 writing, concluding that students found it easier to write in L2 when there was a prior discussion of ideas in L1 (16). L1 in L2 learning allows for work that is more structured, with higher usage of vocabulary in L2, detailed content, and an overall higher standard of language as opposed to conducting the entire writing process in L2 (Yigzaw 16-17). The use of L1 in the planning and organising stage of L2 writing is especially helpful to those students who have a low L2 proficiency.

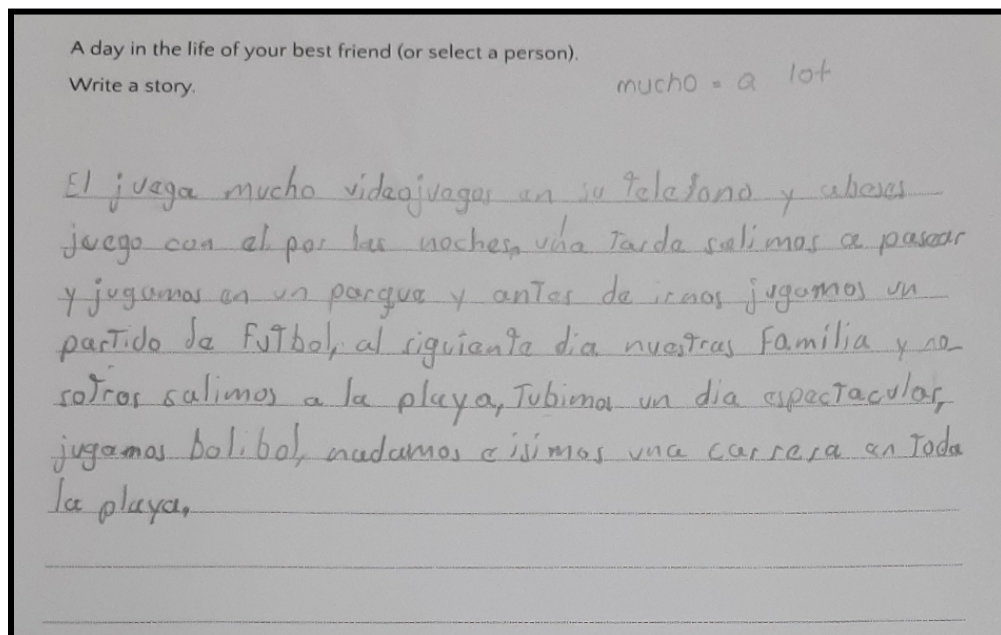


Fig.5 illustrating L1 (Spanish) writing piece

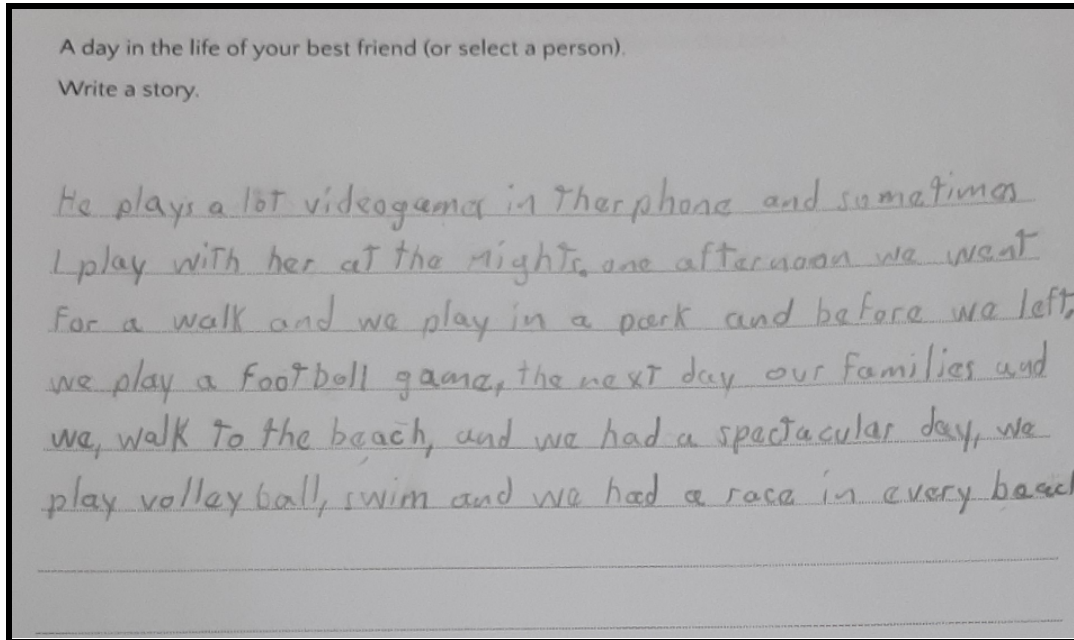


Fig. 6 illustrating L2 (English) writing piece

From this example, it is evident that as a result of L1 brainstorming and planning, the student was able to apply non-core vocabulary such as, “*spectacular*,” in their L2 piece. Conclusively writing firstly in L1 provides a more developed and cohesive L2 writing. Notably the L1 piece was directly translated into L2, leading to some errors with regards to the use of prepositions, past tense and pronouns. However, the general content is detailed and well organised displaying a good grasp of the L2, English.

The student also prepared writings without the initial use of L1. Fig.7 and Fig.8 are two examples of their work. Fig.7 illustrates the response to the topic, “*Write a letter to a friend who has sent you a book for your birthday present, thanking her or him for the gift and telling her or him why you especially like this book.*” Evidently, this piece lacks a descriptive component

which is derived from emotionality and only core vocabulary words were employed, which separates it from being considered a high level proficiency piece of work.

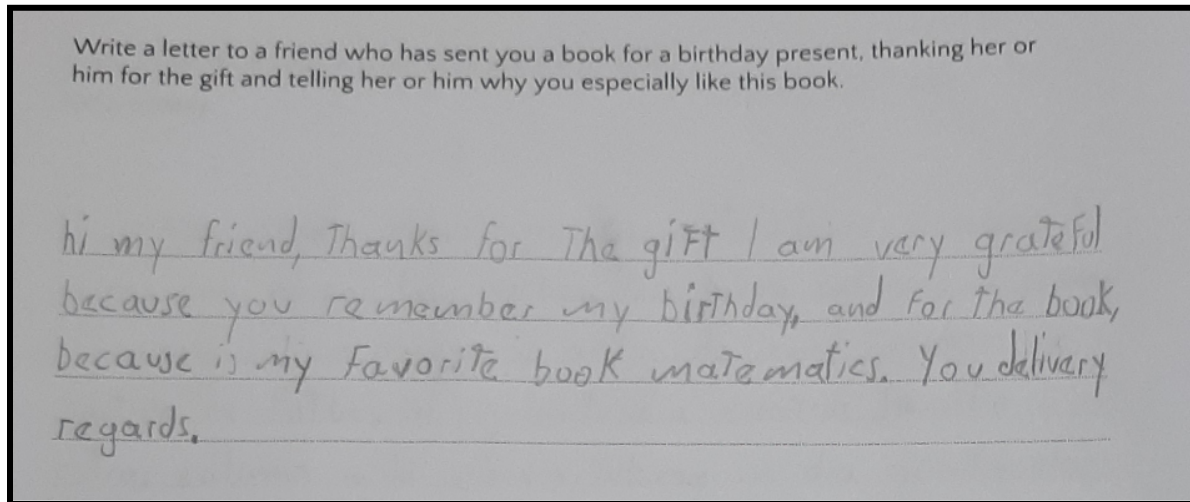


Fig. 7 illustrating the use of L2 without L1 discussion

Similarly, Fig. 8's topic is, "*Imagine you can fly, where would you go and what you would see,*" which again lacks emotionality evident from a lack of vocabulary and a low proficiency in the L2. This piece contains no lexical structures, no complete sentences, the question is barely answered, and the child required assistance in his response.

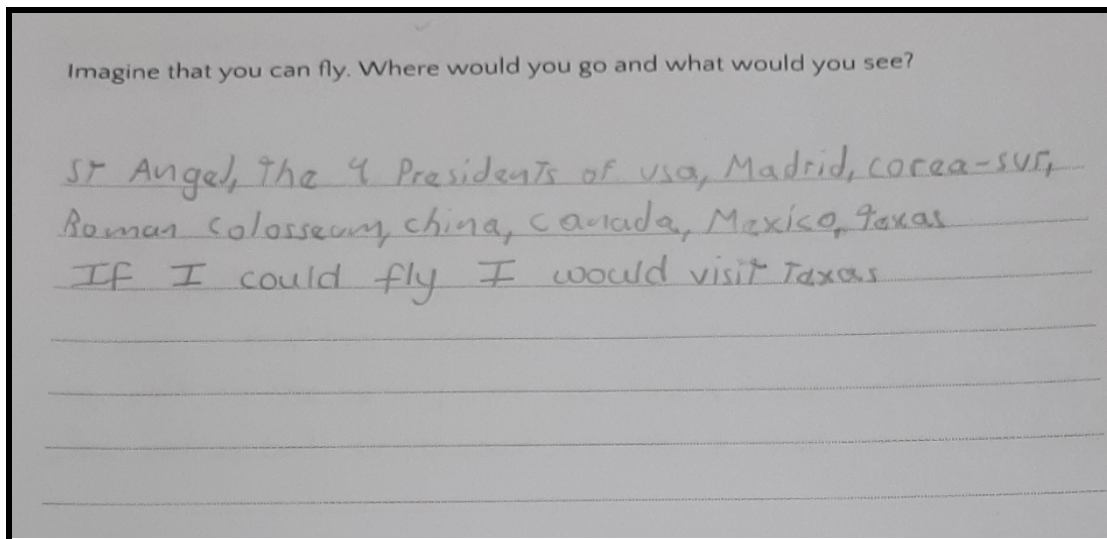


Fig. 8 illustrating the use of L2 without L1 discussion

Evidently without L1 preparation and organisation, the quality of work decreases. There is limited use of vocabulary, no use of non-core vocabulary and a lack of emotionality seen in the work, resulting in inexpressive answers. In both Fig.7 and Fig. 8, the child required more assistance from the tutor as opposed to Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, where he first prepared in L1 before writing in L2. Therefore, as Yigzaw suggests, the use of L1 in L2 writing plays a significant role and affects the quality of work produced by the learner (11).

Fig.9 illustrates an assignment from an online session entitled, "My Favourite Movie." This assignment demonstrated the highest level of English seen throughout the study. The writing displayed storytelling and descriptive capabilities, with complete sentences and phrases. Lexical structures were applied such as compound sentences, the use of adverbs such as "when" and linking words such as "after." The application of these structures displays a level of general understanding of the semantics and lexical structures of English. Fig.9 also illustrates a writing

piece that has surpassed the A1 Beginner level and coincided with the A2 Beginner level, synonymous to the use of words such as “and,” “because,” and “but.”

Therefore, based on all of the writing pieces presented in this chapter, it is clear that when given the time to structure and present ideas in L1, this only enhances the level of work presented in L2.

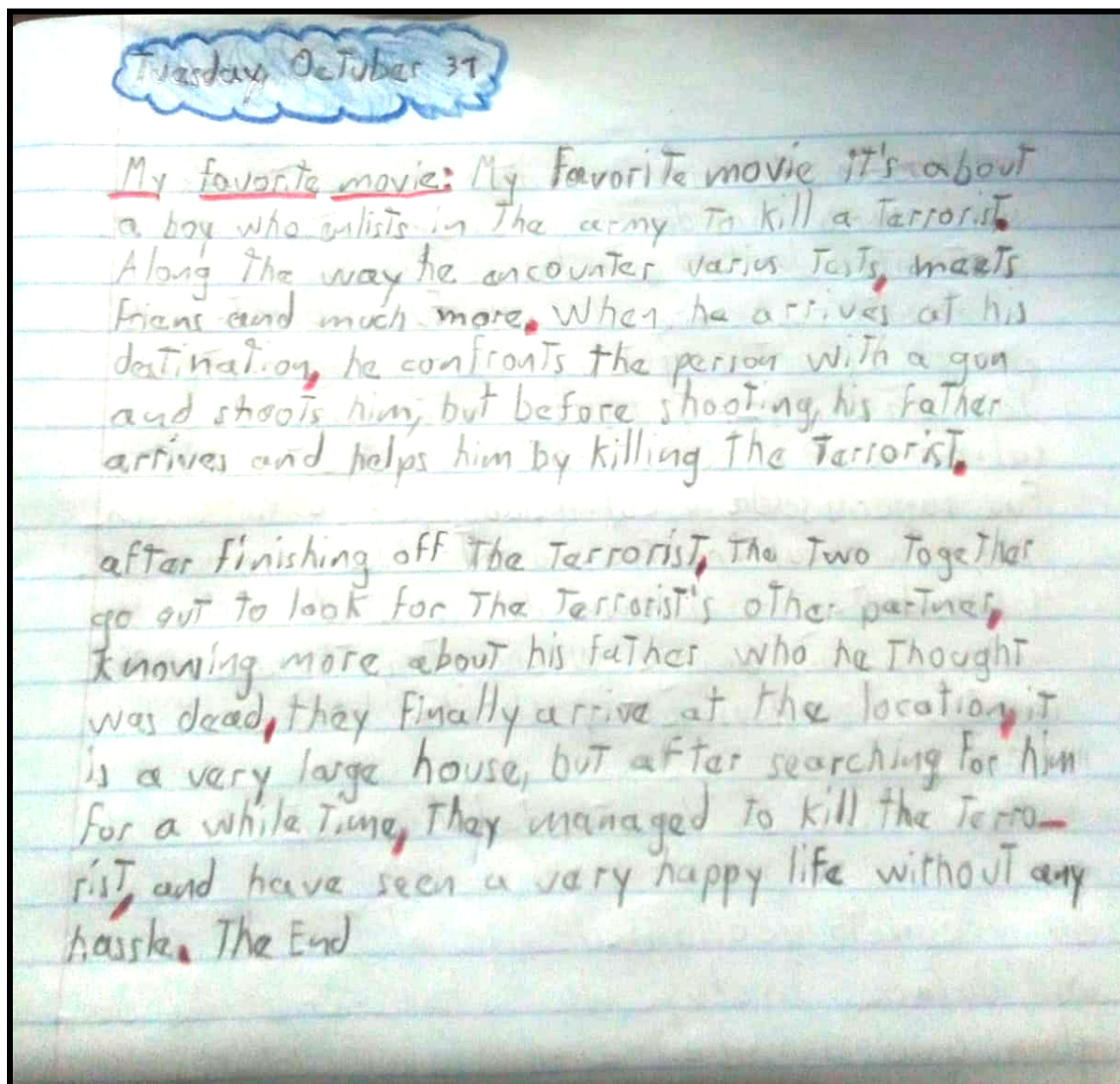


Fig. 9 illustrating writing piece done during an online session

CHAPTER TWO

The Progress Report: Assessing Three Creative Writing Assignments

As previously indicated, T&T's Ministry of Education identifies the Beginner A1 level in English as one of the requirements for a migrant/refugee child to enrol in the school system (Ragoonath Trinidad and Tobago Guardian). This A1 level is derived from the CEFR, which refers to an international standard for assessing language ability. It organises language proficiency into six levels, A1 to C2 as seen in Fig.10, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User. The CEFR covers four elements of language ability, that is, reception (listening and reading), written production, spoken interaction and production (Council of Europe).

In this chapter, written communication is assessed based on the A1 level of the CEFR's writing criteria. This level is divided into three categories: task achievement, grammatical range and accuracy, and lexical range and accuracy. Each category is scored from 0 to 1, with descriptors provided for performance at 0.8, 0.6, 0.4, 0.2, and 0 levels. At the level A1, the CEFR identifies the learner as being able to write simple sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do (Council of Europe 23). As seen in Fig.11 A1 is a beginner level where the learner can write personal information using simple words, phrases and sentences.

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Fig. 10 illustrating a breakdown of the CEFR criteria

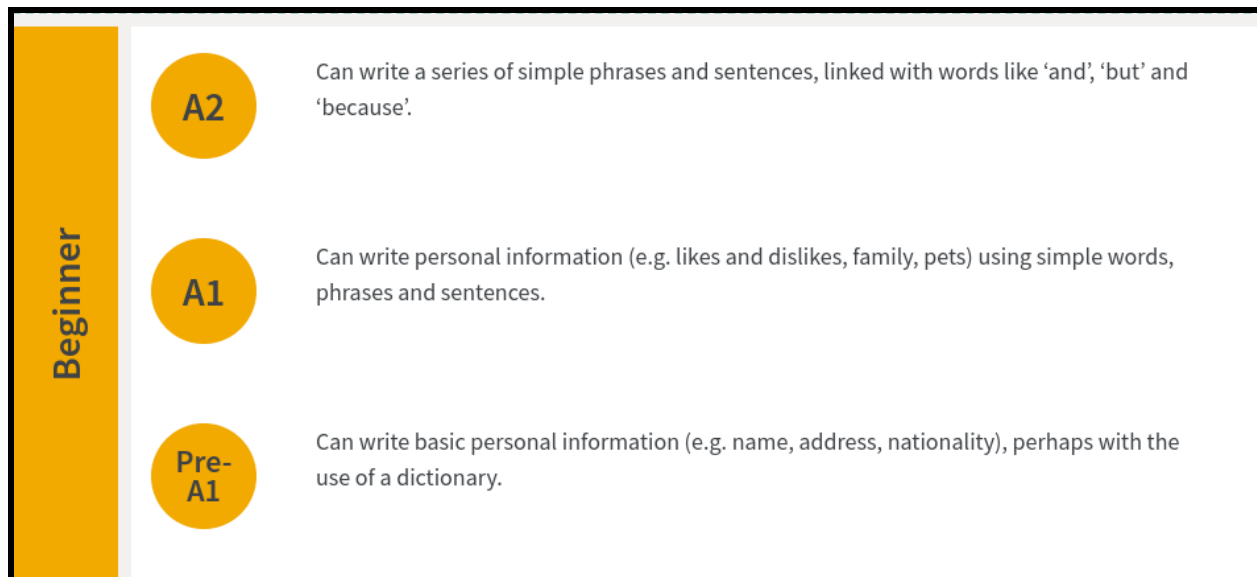


Fig.11 illustrating the breakdown of the A1 writing criteria of the CEFR

The writing assignments being assessed in this chapter have been previously presented as Fig. 6, Fig.7 and Fig.9. Excerpts from each piece are now analysed, highlighting their errors and suggested corrections based on the requirements of the CEFR's A1 level writing criteria.

Fig. 6 illustrating L2 (English) writing piece

- Excerpt: *"He plays a lot videogames in ther phone and sometimes i play with her at the nights."*
- Correction: *"He plays a lot of video games on his phone and I sometimes play with him at night."*
- Excerpt: *"One afternoon we went for a walk and we play in a park and before we left, we play a football game."*
- Correction: *"One afternoon we went for a walk, and played a game of football in the park before returning." OR*

“One afternoon we went for a walk and played football in the park.”

Fig. 7 illustrating The use of L2 without L1 discussion

- Excerpt: *“I am very grateful because you remember my birthday, and for the book, because is my favourite book matematics.”*
- Correction: *“I am very grateful that you remembered my birthday and for the mathematics book, it is my favourite.”*

Fig. 9 illustrating a Writing piece done during an online session

- Excerpt: *My favorite movie it's about...*
- Correction: *My favourite movie is about...*
- Excerpt: *Along the way, he encountes varius tests, meets friends...*
- Correction: *Along the way, he encounters various tests, meets friends...*

In all pieces there are errors including the use of past tense, pronouns, prepositions, subject-verb agreement and spelling errors such as employing American English instead of British English. Despite this, all pieces show a clear correspondence with the Beginner A1 level writing criteria. The child can write about imaginary events and people, form simple sentences and phrases and despite the grammatical errors, the overall message of each assignment remains comprehensible, demonstrating a level of familiarity with the English language that is sufficient to communicate general sentiments, again synonymous with the CEFR's Beginner A1 level of written language.

Fig. 9 must be highlighted in comparison to Fig.6 and Fig.7. Fig.9 showcases a writing assignment done at home, presenting a notable contrast with the work produced at home versus the work produced in the classroom, as the child employs a wider range of vocabulary and grammatical structure in Fig.9, than what was seen in Fig.6 and Fig.7.

Evidently, the child fulfilled the Beginner A1 level of the CEFR's writing criteria, being able to expansively write on hypothetical situations and describe past events by using simple words and sentences. The errors produced in these assignments now act as a guide with regards to helping him improve and advance to A2 and Intermediate levels. These errors further permit the mentor to amend their previous pedagogy in response to addressing the child's weaker areas in English, so as to help him reach his fullest potential in the language.

CHAPTER 3

Influential Factors and Challenges Encountered

In this chapter, the challenges encountered by the student in their learning of English and in the creative writing process will be discussed based on a comparison and analysis between primary and secondary research findings. Subsequently, the primary research findings of this study have identified the following as the challenges encountered by the migrant child: confusion between L1 and L2 (the role of L1), a difference in the development of L2 compared to L1, contextual variation in L2 and the lack of practice opportunity. Attention will also be paid to the role of motivation and anxiety and in language learning.

1. The role of the first language (L1)

When asked if L1, Spanish, has facilitated or inhibited L2, English, learning, the child responded conclusively that there were both positive and negative effects of L1 on L2 learning. Although both languages use the Latin alphabet, there are confusing differences that can challenge the rate of learning and acquisition, based on the influence of L1. The child identifies that there are instances where a word in L2 may look the same as a word in L1 but has a different meaning. On the other hand, there are words which look the same in both L1 and L2 but have the same meaning. The student's response shows the influence of L1, when there are similar words or cognates in L1 and L2 there is a positive influence on acquisition, whereas when words look similar in both languages but L2 has a different meaning than L1 there can be a negative effect on acquisition. The similarities make acquisition easier however the dissimilarities make acquisition burdensome in certain settings as it becomes difficult to manipulate the languages.

The similarities and differences between L1 and L2 as stated by the child coincide with aforementioned secondary research findings, particularly the study done by Fadillah, who identified the role of the first language as a factor that can hinder L2 acquisition. If the first language and second language are similar, L1 can actively aid L2 acquisition, known as positive transfer⁸ (Fadillah 100). On the other hand, when faults in the acquisition or use of L2 are caused by the impact of L1, this is negative transfer or interference. Based on the primary research it is possible for both positive and negative transfer to occur when learning a second language.

2. The route of L2 development vs the route of L1 development

The student has stated that the route of development for L1, Spanish, has been natural simply because of the environment, meaning the content learnt in the classroom naturally had the context to be practised and perfected outside the formal setting. However, with L2 development, the process is not natural, that is the context in which the child lives mainly utilises L1, which makes the L2 acquisition process lengthy and challenging, as he has limited interactions with L2 outside of formal instruction. Although the general context is that of an English speaking country, Trinidad, the student's immediate surroundings include the use of L1, Spanish, limiting the route of a natural developmental process in L2, English.

The difference in the routes of development between L1 and L2 lies in the environment. If both languages are not being learnt simultaneously nor practised in a natural environment, the route of development will be different along with the learning strategies employed. On the contrary, there

⁸ Harlig and Sprouse clearly explain this concept of 'transfer' in the SLA process, highlighting there can be positive and negative transfer (1). When it comes to learning or using a non-native language, transfer generally refers to the effect of the learner's mother tongue, or L1. "Any two languages diverge in some respects but converge in others," (Harlig, Sprouse 1).

are many countries where two or more languages are spoken, which makes acquisition of languages easier because of the environment. That is, the learner is constantly surrounded by a context that allows for practice in the various languages. However, in the case of this child, he lives in a context mainly exposed to Spanish so his process of English acquisition and development is naturally different from that of L1. This difference in development of L2 compared to L1 highlights the need for these migrant/refugee children to interact with native English speakers in the context of formal education.

Secondary research, Fadillah (101), stated that if L1 learning strategies are employed in L2 learning, this makes acquisition easier. However, there are instances where similar strategies may be ineffective as indicated by primary research. The difference in the route of development of L2 in comparison to L1 lies in the environment. If both languages are learnt and practised naturally and regularly, acquisition will be easy. However, if L2 follows an unnatural path of development such as only formal instruction with little to no natural application, acquisition may be more challenging and time consuming.

3. Contextual variation in L2

Contextual variation refers to when the learner produces errors in L2 based on a variety of circumstances. These mistakes demonstrate that L2 students are unable to simply memorise a language's rules and then apply them to their own written work or speech. Evidently in the primary findings as seen in Fig.6, the use of past tense presents contextual variation, as there are certain contexts where the child employs past tense whilst in others he does not, despite the general context requiring the use of past tense. For example, in Fig.6 the second sentence begins

with ‘*One afternoon...*’ indicating past tense. The child proceeds to use the verb ‘*went*’ also indicating past tense, however, the supporting verb is written in present tense, ‘*play*.’ He continues, ‘*...and before we left,*’ employing past tense yet again but the verb which precedes this is in the present tense, ‘*play*.’ Evidently, the child has an understanding of the simple past tense in English. However, there are certain contexts as seen in Fig.6 where there is confusion as to when to employ past or present tense. Notably, within the aforementioned examples there is a pattern, that is, when the child is relaying a series of past events he conjugated the auxiliary verb in the past tense to indicate the primary action yet the actions that precedes the primary, the supporting verbs are conjugated in present tense. Evidently his confusion persists and some errors are made in certain contexts but the same errors are not made in other contexts.

According to secondary research, it is uncommon for students to make the same mistakes in multiple contexts, a mistake may be made in one context but not in another (Fadillah 102). In the case of this assignment, the linguistic context can be referenced where one type of error is produced in one sentence but not in another which is closely linked with negative transfer. In Fig.6, despite the child evidently having a grasp of the simple past tense it was employed in some contexts but not all, which confirms the secondary research findings that errors do not always occur in the same context several times. The child’s misuse of the past tense was not evident throughout the entire piece, there were some instances where it was employed and in others it was not.

4. The lack of practice opportunity

The child involved in this study has stated that the lack of practice opportunity has been his biggest challenge in learning English. Despite the mentoring sessions and extra English classes, language acquisition goes beyond these formal settings. The formal setting can only provide that much exposure to the language, but the opportunity for natural and spontaneous interaction is the greatest difficulty for him. It is not the lack of classroom resources nor support but rather the lack of opportunity to converse on a regular basis in English that poses the greatest challenge to the child's L2 learning and acquisition.

Secondary research findings have also emphasised the lack of exposure to L2 has long been a major challenge for students who are learning a foreign language (Chan 1). As previously mentioned, successful language learning and acquisition goes beyond formal instruction. Practice opportunities provide the learner with the necessary contexts to assess their capabilities in an environment that does not allow for preparation, as an exam would in formal instruction. Practice opportunities focus on the natural and spontaneous use of a language in any given context, rather than the memorisation and regurgitation done during exams in a formal setting. The opportunity to converse naturally and spontaneously is what allows a learner to truly assess their knowledge and development of any given L2.

Based on primary and secondary findings, the lack of practice opportunities can very much hinder the performance of any language learner despite having access to the formal material. If there are no opportunities to apply the language learnt in the classroom, L2 progress becomes staggered.

5. The role of motivation

Motivation plays an essential role in language learning and can determine whether the learner has a high or low achievement. Motivation has not been identified as a challenge but rather a factor that influences the level of the learner's engagement. When the child was asked to rate his level of motivation on a scale of 1-5, one being the lowest and 5 being the highest, he rated his level of motivation at 5. Additionally, when asked to rate how much he enjoys English creative writing activities on the same scale of 1-5, he rated his level of enjoyment at 5. Evidently, the child is highly motivated to learn English and as Fadillah stated, high motivation leads to high levels of achievement (104).

The work seen in Fig.9 surpasses the A1 level and actually includes the use of words such as '*and*,' '*but*,' and '*because*' which are all indicative of the A2 level in the CEFR's writing criteria. It can be concluded that as a result of the child's high level of motivation, he has a high level of achievement. This high level of motivation is directly linked to the learner's intrinsic motivation. This means their engagement in language learning is natural and they deem it rewarding. They have an inherent enjoyment for participating in language learning rather than participating simply because of the desire for some external reward which refers to extrinsic motivation. Therefore, if a language learner is intrinsically motivated, as the child is in this study, they will have a high level of achievement reflected in their work as seen in Fig.9. This coincides with secondary research findings that states high levels of motivation are synonymous to high levels of achievement. On the other hand, if the learner has a low level of motivation, it leads to a low level of achievement (Fadillah 104).

6. The role of anxiety

Anxiety⁹ plays an important role in determining a student's level of success in the foreign language classroom (Fadillah 110). It can be a major hindrance to success and in many cases anxiety can impede the development of L2. Fortunately, when asked, the child involved in this study reported not experiencing anxiety in the environment of the English classroom. Despite the task, whether it is writing or speaking, there is no language anxiety. The child's report of no anxiety in the formal setting when learning English corresponds to their high level of motivation and achievement.

Anxiety remains an important element in language learning and should be considered for every L2 learner. For the students who suffer with anxiety, it can be a hindrance to their success which also impedes their level of engagement and application of the language in the classroom setting, ultimately leading to lower levels of achievement (Fadillah 110).

There is a negative correlation between students' anxiety and students' achievement. That is, students with high anxiety will gain low achievement; on the contrary, students with low anxiety will gain high achievement. Fortunately, as mentioned previously the migrant child involved in this study reported not feeling anxiety and evidently he has a high level of achievement. This suggests that whilst anxiety impedes language acquisition, it is also dependent on the student. That is, not every language student will experience anxiety in L2 learning.

⁹ Anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness that may cause the individual to sweat, feel restless and tense, and have a rapid heartbeat. It can be a normal reaction to stress. Anxiety can help the individual to cope as it may give them a boost of energy that may help with focus. However, for people with anxiety disorders, the fear is not temporary and can be overwhelming which can hinder performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The interest in creative writing for this study stemmed from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus' Community Outreach Program. The University has undertaken this program with the aim of exposing migrant/refugee children to the English language through academic subjects such as Mathematics, Grammar, Social Studies, Science and Creative Writing. University students work with migrant/refugee children by tutoring them for a two-hour session on a weekly basis in the aforementioned subjects.

For this study, creative writing has been the academic focus, whereby a twelve-year old, male migrant child wrote a series of creative writing assignments during in-person and online sessions over a six-week period. Throughout the study, with the aid of secondary and primary research through the child's writing pieces, creative writing has been proven to be an effective method to aiding language learning and acquisition. Creative writing focuses on all the general aspects of a language; reading, writing and speaking. The assignments for the study were done in class and at home and were then assessed in accordance with the Beginner A1 level writing criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The A1 level was employed as the standard for the writing pieces to be measured against because of Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Education's condition for migrant/refugee children. In order for these children to be enrolled in the local education system, they must have the Beginner A1 level in the English language (Ragoonath, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian).

In Chapter 1, the primary research showed that when a second language learner primarily brainstorms and writes in their native language (L1) and then proceeds to write in L2, a higher quality of work in L2 is produced, compared to if the learner solely writes in L2. The secondary research findings, a study conducted by Yigzaw, came to the same conclusions. That is, L2 learners produce a higher quality of work with accurate grammatical structures and non-core vocabulary when they practise writing firstly in L1. This was seen in the comparisons between Fig.5, Fig.6 and Fig.7 and Fig.8 in Chapter 1. The pieces done in L1 and L2 clearly produced a higher quality of work than those done solely in L2. These assignments where L1 and L2 writing were encouraged, the child also surpassed the Beginner A1 level and produced work corresponding with the Beginner A2 level in the CEFR's writing criteria.

In Chapter 2, three of the child's writing pieces were assessed in accordance with the A1 level of the CEFR, as seen in Fig.11. Evidently, all writing pieces contained errors such as subject verb agreement, use of past tense, use of prepositions, incorrect punctuation among others. Despite these errors the general idea remained clear and comprehensible in all pieces. The assignment done at home (Fig.9) was of a higher quality in terms of the student being able to produce a series of short and simple sentences linked with words such as "*and*" and "*but*" which corresponds to the CEFR's A2 level in its writing criteria. The assignments done in the classroom were less developed but still corresponded to the A1 level. The differences in the assignments done at home and those done in the classroom can be attributed to time constraints and environmental differences between the classroom and the home.

Chapter 3 delves deeply into the challenges faced by the migrant child throughout this process of L2 learning. These difficulties included confusion between L2 and L1, different routes of development between L2 and L1, contextual variation in L2 and the lack of practice opportunity. The roles of motivation and anxiety in second language learning were also highlighted.

While conducting this study, a couple of limitations presented itself as seen below:

- Based on the set-up of this Community Outreach Program, each University student was assigned one migrant child, therefore this study is based on the work and progress of one child. It is difficult to generalise the findings and assume that creative writing will be an effective learning strategy for all the children involved in this program, as there were a variety of ages, and each student involved was at a different level of familiarity and proficiency with the English language.
- The time period of investigation and assessment of the child's writing was limited. Although it was over a six-week period, this included only two contact hours per week with occasional and short online sessions, limiting the amount of writing that was actually conducted given that other subjects needed to be addressed as well.

Based on the findings of this study, some suggestions for future research include:

- Investigating if and how personality style affects an individual's second language learning with regards to speed of acquisition and level of input or engagement with material outside of the classroom.
- Investigating how to overcome language anxiety for second language learners exploring subtopics such as: what causes anxiety when learning a second language, why do some

students experience language anxiety but others do not and methods to overcome language anxiety.

- Exploring the feasibility of creating an English creative writing program for the migrant/refugee population in Trinidad and Tobago (children and adults), exposing them to grammatical structures, a wide range of vocabulary, and the opportunity to develop conversational skills through the interaction with native speakers.
- Investigating the role of age in language learning; are younger language learners more successful in the overall process as opposed to older language learners and what contributes to them being more successful.

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APPENDIX A

- How long have you been exposed to the English language?

- a. Less than one year
- b. 1-2 years
- c. 2-4 years
- d. More than 5 years

- What is the most difficult part of learning English?

- a. Grammatical structures
- b. Lack of practice opportunity
- c. Lack of learning opportunity
- d. Other

If you selected other, please state below

- On a scale of 1-5, one being the lowest, 5 being the highest, how much do you enjoy English creative writing exercises?

- On a scale of 1-5, one being the lowest, 5 being the highest, how beneficial do you think English creative writing exercises have been to your overall English language development?

- On a scale of 1-5, one being the lowest, 5 being the highest, how motivated are you to learn English?
-

- Has this practice been effective in your acquisition of the English language?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

APPENDIX B

- ¿Cuánto tiempo ha estado expuesto al idioma inglés?

- a. Menos de un año
- b. 1-2 años
- c. 2-4 años
- d. Más de 5 años

- ¿Cuál es la parte más difícil de aprender inglés?

- a. Estructuras gramaticales
- b. Falta de oportunidad de práctica.
- c. Falta de oportunidad de aprendizaje.
- d. Otro

Si seleccionó otro, indíquelo

- En una escala del 1 al 5, siendo uno el más bajo y 5 el más alto, ¿cuánto disfrutas de los ejercicios de escritura creativa en inglés?

- En una escala del 1 al 5, siendo uno el nivel más bajo y 5 el más alto, ¿qué tan beneficiosos cree que han sido los ejercicios de escritura creativa en inglés para su desarrollo general del idioma inglés?

- En una escala del 1 al 5, siendo uno el nivel más bajo y 5 el más alto, ¿qué tan motivado estás para aprender inglés?
-

- ¿Esta práctica ha sido efectiva en su adquisición del idioma inglés?
 - a. Si
 - b. No