

Writing across foreign languages: Same task, different processes?

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Recently, writing research has started to pay overdue attention to cognitive writing processes (e.g., Barkaoui, 2016, 2019; Michel et al., 2020; Révész et al., 2017, 2019). Despite the advances in the field, cognitive writing research is still mainly grounded in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts and corresponding models of writing (Kellogg, 1996; Field, 2004). Consequently, cognitive writing processes triggered in foreign languages other than English remain a hitherto unexplored field and lack validation by a cross-language study. The aim of this study was to extend cognitive writing research to learners of French as a foreign language. It set out to investigate to what extent writing processes elicited by the same task vary across foreign languages. Therefore, a sample of six B2-learners of French was recruited and assigned the same B2-level writing task (in translation) as an EFL control group of six participants (N = 12). The writing sessions were conducted in Inputlog 8.0. (Leijten & Van Waes, 2013), and the participants' writing behaviour was captured via a Tobii TX300 eye tracker. Keystroke-logging data and eye-tracking recordings then served as a basis for stimulated recall interviews. Based on a mixed-methods approach, this research project attempted to answer the following questions: (i) Does the same task trigger different writing behaviours across foreign languages? (ii) Are cognitive writing processes transferable from EFL to further foreign language settings, thereby validating existing cognitive writing models? (iii) Or, is there a need for language-specific, i.e. context-appropriate, writing models? This cross-language study provided new insights into writing processes across foreign languages. Findings indicate that writing processes are to a large extent comparable across languages, allowing to infer the cross-language validity of cognitive writing models. Nevertheless, language-specific tendencies and difficulties emerged from the qualitative analysis of stimulated recall interviews.