Languaging in First-Year Composition: Multilingual College Writers' Language Practices in Research Writing Process

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Abstract: Multilingual writers represent a wide and heterogenous population. By studying the writing practices of Nepali students, as a significant portion of US international student population, this article seeks to foreground the issue of perception as an important factor of multilingual student writing. This qualitative case study focuses on how any acquired negative perception toward L1 use in L2 writing affect international students' research writing process. Recruiting participants from two multilingual sections of the FYC course at a large public university in the Midwest, I employed a recursive approach to analyze data collected via questionnaire, interview, and eight written artifacts. The study's findings suggest participants perceive and utilize their multilingual repertoires as a resource during their research writing process in English, using their L1 to generate ideas, to conceptualize important tasks throughout the research writing process, and to peer consultation process. It goes on to show what writing instructors might learn from this case to address the issue of perception and how they might foster the mobilization of multiple languages, when they are likely to enhance any part of the writing process, for any group of international students.

Keywords: Languaging, first language (L1) writing, second language (L2) writing, cross-cultural writing, first year composition (FYC), multilingual writers, writing transfer

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Introduction

Multilingual writers have more than one language at their disposal. This puts them in a unique situation with additional opportunities to use multiple writing strategies and perspectives in their writing process. Because students come from a wide and heterogeneous population, using any single definitive terminology is not viable. Consequently, multiple terminological labels have been used to recognize multilingual writers, such as international students, ESL/EFL writers, immigrant writers and so on. While these categories are too broad, they do not accurately represent the realities of diverse teaching contexts that have received low research attention in the past. For example, countries like China, Philippines, Japan, and Nepal are listed as the EFL writers (Kirkpatrick, 2007). However, because of their dissimilar educational, cultural, and socio-economic upbringing, students from these countries do not always show common writing features. This study, therefore, undertakes and investigates Nepali multilingual writers' writing practices specifically. Nepali students tend to exhibit unique writing characteristics due to their educational backgrounds in Nepal.

As a multilingual, multiethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural country with its relatively small size, Nepal contributes the 11th-greatest number of international students to US academia (IIE, 2019). There is a need to study the writing practices of different major groups of international students based on their educational backgrounds, and Nepalese students are one group that has not got much attention in writing studies scholarship. Studying their writing practices is also likely to yield broader perspectives about international students' writing. However, to date, there has been a dearth of research focusing on Nepali writing populations (Henderson Lee & Pandey, 2020). Because of Nepal's unique educational settings and the various roles that English language plays in different settings including educational, it is crucial to focus on Nepali student participants particularly. Nepal also possesses distinctive educational features such that previous studies may not necessarily be predictive of Nepali student behavior. Nepali students' educational context includes institutions and practices that may make common assumptions about them within US writing programs unjustified. Two of such assumptions are that Nepal treats English as a foreign language only and English functions as a foreign language in educational settings as well. While the first assumption is partially true as the country officially has not yet recognized English as a second language, recent studies have shown that English plays multiple roles there (Pandey, 2020; Giri, 2015). These studies further contend that English functions even as a primary language and as the only language in private and technical schools and at the university level. It is quite common to see Nepali schools making strict rules to use English only in school (Pandey, 2020). These cases suggest that because of the diverse socio-political context and varied language practices, Nepali students may not have developed a uniform perception toward English language use and their multilingual abilities.

Table 1
Total number of incoming students from Nepal in the AY 2018/19

Undergraduate	7471
Graduate	4037
Non-degree	127
OPT	1594
Total	13229

Source. Open Door Data, Institute of International Education, 2019.

Nepal comprises both public and private schools, and, as a rule, Nepali private schools tend to mandate that their students always speak English. As shown in fig. 1, some private schools highlight their strict English-only policy by displaying warnings front of the school like: "Be alert! You are entering into English speaking zone." In such English-speaking zones, meaning school compounds, students are discouraged from using their L1s (i.e., Nepali and other local languages). If students violate this rule, schools may even use corporal punishment or monetary fines. Although most teachers in Nepal are bilingual, pedagogical practices are monolingual. Spending many years in such educational environments, students can develop pejorative views toward the use of their L1s. Thus, it is important to investigate how students perceive their L1 after graduating from high school. Although no relevant literature or statistics are available, many Nepali students who go abroad for foreign degrees are from private schools. This prediction is reflected in this study's research participants, all of whom were the graduates of private high schools.

Source. Author 5/13/2017.

Fig. 1. A private school in Kathmandu posts their English usage rule on the school premises.

This study delves in studying how L1 use take place in L2 research writing project if L1 has been stigmatized for a long time. Citizens of Nepal speak over 100 languages. However, English, despite its official status as a foreign language, plays a crucial role in Nepali education, as it is the only language of instruction for certain private, technical,

and business schools. The strict English-only policy at these schools also contributes to unique perceptions in young Nepali student writers writing in English. Additionally, as a significant portion of the foreign-born student population studying in America, Nepali students contribute to the diversity of writing classrooms in US universities, and their unique linguistic upbringing makes them worthwhile subjects of study.

Use of L1 in L2 Writing: A Brief Overview

Traditionally, using L1 while writing in their L2 was considered a sign of negative transfer, as thinking in an L1 and in an L2 were thought to involve discrete thought processes. Teachers discouraged their students from drawing on their L1 experience, fearing that this would hinder their L2 writing process (Weijen et al., 2009). Encouraging students to think and write entirely in the target language was considered the most efficient way of teaching writing. However, this notion has been excoriated in ensuing research studies, which have suggested that the use of L1 in L2 writing is best understood as context specific. In other words, there are certain situations where multilingual writers can produce a better text when they utilize their L1 because it enables them to engage diversity in terms of cultural backgrounds, values, assumptions, and practices, and in other situations, they perform better when utilizing their L2. Beare (2000), Wang (2003), and Woodall (2002) similarly conclude that, although the extent of their use can vary, L2 writers often use their L1 while writing in an L2 across multiple phases, such as planning, generating ideas, or producing text content, or while solving linguistic problems like vocabulary issues.

A study conducted by Ramirez (2012) using four participants studying in an American university reveals that L2 writers' use of L1 manifests naturally. Though their L1 usage largely determines how proficient the participants are in L1 and L2 contexts (EFL vs. ESL), the findings suggest that L2 writers are mostly drawing on L1 conceptual processes while generating content, organizing texts, and comprehending given tasks. Additionally, writers' use of their L1 largely determines how efficiently they involve cognitive processing in textual production, as "[t]he more the cognitive processing is related to the textual output, the less L1 is used in it" (Wang & Wen, 2002, pp. 239-240). However, activities that are not directly associated with textual output have a high possibility of being carried out in the L1. A later study carried out by Weijen et al. (2009) found that Dutch multilingual writers utilize their L1 in the L2 writing process well while writing argumentative essays under think-aloud conditions. Though their use of L1 varied in different conceptual activities, such as generating ideas, planning, and forming meta-comments, all the participants used their L1 while writing an argumentative essay in their L2 to some extent. However, the research focused on the use of L1 for conceptual activities only. Other studies, like an earlier effort by Wang and Wen (2009), contend that

activities that are more closely associated with the text content occur less frequently during the use of L1 while writing in L2.

Multiple factors can cause multilingual writers to use their L1 in the L2 writing process. Weijen et al. (2009) argue that three major factors include low L2 proficiency, L1-L2 cognate/non-cognate language relation, and transfer of training. A study by Woodall (2002) that focused on 28 adult participants showed that less-linguistically-proficient L2 learners switched to their L1s more frequently than more-advanced learners. More difficult L2 writing tasks were associated with longer L1 usage. The same study also revealed that, for students of cognate languages (e.g., English/Spanish), longer periods of L1 use helped produce a higher quality L2 text, whereas, in the case of a non-cognate language pair (e.g., English/Japanese), the use of the L1 was associated with lower-quality texts.

Despite the wealth of research centered on multilingual writers' perceptions and uses of English, some questions remain with regards to Nepali multilingual writers studying in FYC courses in the US, given their relatively unique educational background. The purpose of this study is to investigate Nepali undergraduate students' perceptions of their languaging practices as they use their L2 (i.e., English) to complete a research essay assignment in a US university's first-year composition (FYC) course. The two primary research questions in this study are as follows:

1) How do Nepali undergraduate students in a US composition class use their L1 for the research writing process?
2) What are Nepali students' attitudes toward using their L1 in a first-year composition class in the US?

Methodology

This case study was conducted at a public university in the American Midwest during the Spring 2016 semester. The participants in this study were from two multilingual sections of the school's FYC course. In this university, once the participants fulfill the minimum language requirement for admission, which is either a score of 6.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or a score of 93 in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), they can enroll in either a regular FYC course or in a special multilingual section. The latter is open to multilingual writers only. Both multilingual sections in this study were taught by the graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who were trained and supervised by the L2 writing director. These two GTAs used the same curriculum and syllabus approach, and they were both mentored by the L2 writing director. The participants were in their first year of undergraduate study and represented a variety of different majors and disciplines (see table 3.1).

Table 2
Research Participants' Biographical Information

Participants	n	Major	Age	Gender	# of Months	# of Languages	First Language
Suman	1	Engineering	19	M	9	3	Nepali
Kabita	1	Nursing	22	F	5	3	Nepali
Kamal	1	IT	19	M	9	3	Nepali
Prem	1	Engineering	20	M	9	3	Newari
Gopal	1	Engineering	19	M	9	3	Newari
Saroj	1	IT	18	M	5	3	Nepali
Puran	1	Engineering	21	M	5	3	Nepali
Ganesh	1	IT	20	M	9	3	Nepali
Sagun	1	Engineering	18	M	5	3	Nepali

Note. n=number: 9; IT=Information Technology.

Most of the participants were in their second semester (having started school the previous Fall), whereas a few of them were in their first semester. There was no attempt to create for gender balance in this study. Thus, it should be noted that there was a large discrepancy in the number of female and male participants (N=1 (female); N= 8 (male). All the participants were Nepali, and their mean age was 19.55. All of these participants had been learning English in the EFL context for at least ten years, and almost every one of them was able to speak and write in a language other than their L1 (see table 3.1 and table 3.2).

Table 3
Participants' Years of English Instruction

Participants	Years of English instruction
Suman	15
Kabita	11
Kamal	14
Prem	12
Gopal	15
Saroj	13
Puran	15
Ganesh	15
Sagun	14

Mean: 13.77; standard deviation: 4.41.

In the interest of full disclosure, I must note that my positionality is strongly mirrored by the participants in this study, as I come from a very similar educational context. However, I did not have any relation to any of the participants. After receiving IRB approval, I requested that the GTAs, who were the only two instructors teaching the multilingual FYC sections, share my interest in recruiting Nepali research participants from their classes. Ten participants attended the recruitment meeting in which I clarified the study's research objectives. This meeting also included a discussion of how student participation was totally voluntary, and that participants retained the authority to withdraw from the study at any time. I started collecting the participants' questionnaire responses once they started working on their research essay in April 2016. At this time, they had already completed work on three different types of writing assignments as part of their FYC course requirements (i.e., a literacy narrative, a comparison and contrast essay, and an argumentative essay). For this assignment, students could choose any research topic that they were interested in. However, they were required to include a primary research component, cite at least six sources, and compose eight to ten pages in total. Once they completed their research essay assignment, I asked them to provide their essays to me for use as written artifacts. After analyzing the questionnaire responses and written artifacts, I conducted interviews on a one-on-one basis in the university periphery.

Research Materials and Data Analysis

To gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences while using L1 during their L2 writing process, and to record their perceptions regarding the use of their L1, I collected three forms of data: questionnaire responses, individual retrospective interviews, and written artifacts (i.e., student essays). The questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to investigate the Nepali multilingual writers' perceptions of their L1 use while writing the research essay assignment in English. The participants could complete the questionnaire at a place and time of their choosing. The ten participants were sent a set of questionnaires via email and were asked to return the completed responses within a week. Nine participants responded on time and one withdrew from the study. The main advantage of the questionnaire tool is that it is relatively easy to administer. In keeping with prevailing practices in qualitative research, the items on the questionnaire used in this study allowed for open-ended responses. This strategy was chosen to allow participants to describe their personal experiences and attitudes regarding the use of their L1 while writing in L2 in greater detail than items like Likert scale questions would have allowed. Because it was able to solicit such detailed responses, the questionnaire played a key role in the study's methodological design and served as a useful complement to other data-collection methods.

The second data collection tool was the set of written artifacts represented by the research essays collected from participants. To identify any obvious signposts of L1 use and to use for think-aloud protocol, participants' final essay assignments were collected as written artifacts prior to conducting the interview. At the beginning of the data collection period, the participants were informed that their final essay assignment, which they would submit to their teacher, would be collected along with the directions they received for the assignment. They were also informed that if they chose not to submit their final essay, they could withhold the essay without putting themselves at any risk. Consequently, one of the participants did not submit the essay. Nevertheless, the artifacts remained valuable data sources, particularly during the interview process because they were used as a think aloud protocol. Additionally, the written artifacts addressed diverse topics and experiences, such as eating habits among student groups at their university, the difficulty of paying college tuition, the experience of living with obsessive-compulsive disorder, the effectiveness of standardized tests, children and the internet, health company market research, and bullying. For example, when participants mentioned that they utilized their L1 during the L2 writing process, they were invited to point out specific instances in any part of the essay itself where L1 was used, if they could. In this way, the written artifacts helped investigate whether there were any obvious signposts of their L1 use within their research essays.

Guided by Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing model, I conducted an in-depth retrospective interview with my participants. The interview data helped investigate the use of participants' L1 in their L2 research writing process in greater detail. It provided an extended opportunity for the participants to discuss issues that pertained specifically to their experiences. For instance, many of the participants were very brief while providing written answers to the questionnaire despite making references to a wide range of topics. The interview clarified some of the issues that the research participants did not address in detail while responding to the questionnaire. All the interviews were conducted one-on-one on campus during April 2016 (see Appendix B). The complete audio from these interviews was recorded via a Sony ICD-PX720 Voice Recorder.

After the data was transcribed using the MAXQDA12 software, a grounded approach was used to analyze the content. The analysis began immediately after obtaining data from the questionnaire sets. Multiple data sources, theoretical perspectives, and analytic positions were used to identify and articulate the emerging sub-themes, themes, and patterns. Per the process described by Merriam (2009), I constructed the categories, sorted them, named them, and determined the number of categories connected with current theories and literature. For qualitative analysis, I attempted to reduce the volume of information to more easily identify themes or patterns across participants' responses. To maintain the inter-code reliability, I took help from my colleague who volunteered coding around 15 percent of the entire data set. In the end,

all the responses were categorized according to the following themes: perception, attitude, and practice.

Findings and Discussion

To discuss the findings of the study, I have categorized them in two major themes: perception (linguistic repertoires, cultural background in consultation, genre awareness, and asymmetrical language exposure) and practice (writing transfer, multilingual writing strategies, L1 for text comprehension).

5.1 Perception

Despite hailing from an educational context that instilled a deleterious view of their L1 use, most of the participants perceived their L1 as a resource in their L2 research writing process. Participants indicated that their L1 played a significant role while writing a research essay assignment in English, though it did not help them in any phase more than it helped them in others. This suggests that their language perception and writing practices are essentially multilingual. For instance, many of the participants used their L1 in the preliminary phase of their research writing, such as while choosing a topic, brainstorming, finding research participants, and outlining their ideas, while other participants used their L1 during the composing process of the first or even the final draft. Some even used their L1 while formatting citations in APA style. Rather than seeing their L1 as a hindrance, the participants viewed their L1 as an asset in their writing process. This could be because being multilingual writers allowed them to examine the issue of L1/L2 usage from two (or even multiple) perspectives. The data supporting this theme was separated into three sub-categories: L1-L2 connection, cultural background in consultation, research writing.

5.1.1 Linguistic repertoires

Multilingual student writers were found to perceive their two linguistic repertoires in a complementary manner and transfer their L1 writing knowledge to L2 writing contexts. When asked, "Do you think that Nepali was useful while writing the research assignment in English?" most participants perceived that even though their L1 offered nothing concrete that could be applied while writing the research essay in their L2, their L1 nevertheless helped them across multiple stages of the L2 writing process. Suman and Sagun, for example, framed the L1 and L2 connection as follows:

I still use Nepali language when I brainstorm on any topic that is assigned for my English writing. I use Nepali language to generate ideas. I think a lot of creative ideas while speaking in Nepali because that is the language, I am comfortable with, but not the English. So, it creates a barrier for me to think a lot. (Interview, 05-04-16)

I do not think I would have completed every assignment in time if I did not use Nepali. Nepali has been helpful. I do not know whether it'd be the same case if I was born in the US. But since I was born in Nepal, I used different languages, and it helps me to explain and understand and translate things easily. (Interview, 05-02-16)

Virtually all participants expressed some connection between their L1 and their L2 research writing. Most of the participants expressed that they would often choose English because they did not feel comfortable with their L1 grammar rules. But their preference was to speak, brainstorm, and choose topics in Nepali. Their L1 also assisted their writing when they felt that they lacked the vocabulary or proficiency to express themselves in their L2. In the response above, Suman describes how he still used his L1 while writing in L2. This suggests that, while he has come a long way in his writing process, he still feels the need to use his L1 in his L2 writing still occurs in a variety of situations. Sagun's response is somewhat unique, as he argues that his Nepali origins clearly manifest in his research writing. This correlates with the results of Taylor (2009), which suggest that the learning of English as an L2 cannot be separated from students' L1s.

5.1.2 Cultural background in consultation

During the process of writing the research essay, most of the participants were found to have consulted with someone who shared a similar cultural context. The participants appeared to choose Nepali consultants because of a sense of cultural proximity. They reported that they felt most comfortable sharing their thoughts with someone who had a similar cultural background. For example, Sagun commented, "It's easier to talk with the Nepali friends, but it's very hard to explain things to other friends who are from other linguistic backgrounds" (Interview, 05-02-16). Similarly, another participant, Gopal, described his collaborative impulses as follows: "I based my decisions on my Nepali classmates' reviews and feedback because they were direct and close to my thoughts" (Interview, 05-04-16). During the consultation period, the participants had several informal interactions with each other wherein they almost exclusively used Nepali to discuss their English writing. According to them, the best way to proceed with regards to their essay assignment became clearer when they expressed their ideas verbally in their L1. One

reason for these informal interactions may have been that most of the participants engaging in them were in the same section of the FYC class (out of nine total participants, seven were from the same section). During their consultation, they used Nepali whenever they had trouble navigating difficult English vocabulary.

These findings argue in two different ways. First, instead of considering themselves as only resource of a writing classroom, writing instructors should take the whole writing classroom as a bigger resource repository. Second, there can be multilingual students who will benefit better from being grouped based on their similar linguistic and cultural proximity. I argue that the writing instructors should be aware of the diversity of their writing classroom and be considerate of the linguistic and cultural diversity of their classroom while assigning any group assignments including the peer consultation process. If the multilingual writers are grouped based on their linguistic and cultural skills, it helps them keep up with classwork, become more productive, and be more result oriented.

5.1.3 Genre awareness

While discussing the research writing assignment during their one-on-one interviews (and in their questionnaire responses as well), the participants agreed that this assignment was the toughest one in the entire FYC class. The main reason participants provided for this perception was that the assignment was the first time that they had undertaken such a research writing task. Additionally, the participants noted that writing the research essay was a time-consuming process insofar as it required reviewing the literature, collecting primary and secondary data, and recruiting research participants. This idea is illustrated by Prem's comment below:

> In fact, it is the toughest assignment of the English 101 class. The first thing is the page length. It must be about eight to ten pages long. We need our own primary data. That is the main factor that makes this research paper the toughest one. (Interview, 05-02-16)

Although it was their first time working on such genre, the participants mentioned that they found their L1 quite supportive and that they were able to successfully draw on their previous (L1) writing expertise to some extent. For example, when they reviewed relevant literature, their prior genre knowledge helped them parse the complicated academic texts they encountered. When asked how his L1 was supportive in the literature review context, Kamal said:

Though I have not written a research paper in Nepali, I have had to follow the same steps that I now follow in the English language. I start brainstorming and collecting information, then I start writing. There is not much difference whether I write in English or in Nepali. I follow the same steps. (Interview, 05-02-16)

One likely reason for the participants' considering research writing the toughest assignment is because of their unfamiliarity of the research writing genre. There is a conceptual gap between their contemporary writing context and their experiences in Nepal. During the interview, most of the participants mentioned their lack of research writing experience in their schooling in Nepal. This gap highlights a common reality for EFL students with regards to research writing. As Bazerman (2013) discusses, higher education, especially with respect to EFL students, frequently fails to pursue a deep and principled understanding of student writing beyond the development of basic transcription skills, often relying on traditional methods and beliefs. Like many EFL writing contexts, the Nepali education system does not prioritize research writing practices.

When the participants were asked to express which language, they would like to be able to write their paper in, assuming they could choose any language they wanted, many of them chose English. Though they gave many reasons for this choice, two consistent answers were that they have been trained to do so since the beginning of their schooling in Nepal, and the English language is simply very popular and widely used. English was the only language to communicate inside the school periphery in Nepal. Schools' such longing was justified because of the international status of English. According to most participants, using English in their writing would broaden their readership. Kamal framed his thought process as follows:

I can write well in either language, but the question is, who your writing is for? When I write in English, even the Nepali readers can read it, and so, of course, can other people. But if I write in Nepali, only the Nepali readers can read it. (Kamal, Interview, 05-02-16)

One explanation for this trend in responses is that the participants are conscious of their potential readership, and they wanted to reach wider audiences using a language that enjoys a place of greater global privilege. Atkinson (2003) notes, "Obviously, English has a highly privileged place in the hierarchy of languages used for academic purposes" (p. 51). The elevated status of the English language may have affected these participants' use of their L2 (i.e., English) in their writing despite concerns about their Nepali identities. In other words, the writers felt more empowered writing in English than in their L1 (i.e., Nepali), and they felt a need to make their writing accessible to wider audiences.

5.1.4 Asymmetrical language exposure

When the participants were asked about their perceptions of being multilingual, they had mixed feelings. This was not due to attitudinal issues related to their L1. Instead, it was due to their strong desire to use L1 to a larger extent than they did. This, of course, demonstrates the shift toward a strong positive perception of their L1. When they were asked during the one-on-one interview, "How do you see your transition from being a student of the Nepali education system to being an American university student in the US context?" eight participants expressed mixed feelings, like Suman expresses in the following excerpt:

> I am getting more exposure to English but less exposure writing in Nepali. So, the trend is going opposite side. The trend of English is accelerating while the trend of writing in Nepali is decelerating. I see myself in a progressive manner. (Suman, Interview, 05-04-16)

Previously, the participants' English use was limited mainly to educational contexts, whereas at the American university, the scenario was reversed (i.e., their Nepali use was mainly confined to conversations with their Nepali roommates). In a broader sense, the participants' responses showed that they wanted to maintain their identities as balanced multilinguals. This may be because multilinguals' "…identity development is situated within a wider system of social, cultural, and historical relations" (Lee, 2013, p. 331). Not being able to utilize their L1 led the participants to experience strong regret no matter how strong their L2 composing became.

Despite their English-only educational background, all the participants demonstrated an extremely positive attitude with regards to their L1 use. They possess such positive attitude toward their L1 despite their prior educational background that viewed the L1 use pejoratively. When asked to reflect on their tendencies regarding their use of L1 and its role in their writing, all the participants expressed a positive attitude with respect to their ability to utilize cross-language abilities to enhance their L2 writing development. None of the participants described their use of L1 as a hindrance. When asked whether using L1 during the writing process is appropriate, their general response was that L1 usage can enhance the L2 writing process, as Sagun mentions below:

> I used Nepali mostly to think about the points, opinions, and arguments. I used it in quite a similar manner as I used English. I mainly used Nepali while writing the introduction and conclusion because first you have to introduce your essay. Translating those things from Nepali helps me to develop my writing. (Questionnaire, 04-16-16)

In their questionnaire responses, many of the participants were hesitant to say that they used L1 in their L2 research writing. This could be an effect of their educational upbringing, as their home country's school environment did not tend to allow them to use their L1 at all. However, this could also be because they understood their writing process as something that involved both their L1 and L2 since they came to the US, a society where they were at a linguistic disadvantage in L2 and realized they could use L1 to address the disadvantage. However, when the interviewer clarified that the idea of L1 usage does not necessarily refer only to orthographic form of the writing, the participants corrected their questionnaire responses and tended to respond as Sagun did in the excerpt above. Their attitude toward their L1 use shifted dramatically. They found that they used their L1 in various phases of their writing to pursue a variety of writing strategies. The data that supported this general theme was classified into three sub-categories: asymmetrical language exposure, language preferences, and audience awareness. The intellectual failure of monolingual monsters of the world – whether they are tyrants that seek to destroy people's languages/cultures or misguided educators who believe they are doing learners a favor by banning one or more of their languages – begins with their fundamental misunderstanding of multilinguals and multilingual communication. They do not understand that tying one hand of an artist behind her back doesn't make her a better artist, regardless of any other variables. Stopping a multilingual from using both/all her languages doesn't help her in any way (see "interdependence hypothesis, Cummins, 1981 – fostering one language fosters all, as long as the language learner is trying and motivated to learn – by implication, no language must be suppressed for any language to flourish).

5.2 Practice

Citing their new educational context, participants expressed the idea that the nature of the cross-language acts they performed had changed dramatically. All three data sources (i.e., the questionnaire, written artifacts, and interviews) showed that most of the participants practiced using L1 in their research writing process, although such usage varied across the phases of the writing process. Certain tendencies of their L1 use indicated that these participants displayed cross-language and cross-cultural knowledge, which were both apparent in their writing. They utilized their L1 in many ways, including, for instance, topic selection, brainstorming, outlining, thesis development, drafting, and proofreading. Even though the participants were in a US university context, most of them were inspired to address Nepali socio-cultural issues in their writing. Saroj described his rationale in this way:

Whenever I think on any topic, I think how it would be if it were in Nepali context. That gives me a unique idea, rather than the common ideas of the US I prefer to mix the Nepali context into my writing. (Interview, 05-03-16)

Saroj's research topic was "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder," and his research participants were students from Nepal, India, and Bangladesh studying at the same university. This example suggests that participants' use of their L1 during the English writing process was not due only to its convenience, but also their background, upbringing, and culture. The participants perceived their culture as playing a significant role in their writing process, which is why eight out of nine participants solicited feedback from Nepali classmates, senior Nepali students, and South Asian writing tutors. In addition to their culture, their past writing experiences, their previous writing strategies, and their L1 remained crucial to their research writing processes. The data supporting this general theme tended to fall into three different areas: writing transfer, multilingual writing strategies, and L1 for text comprehension.

5.2.1 Writing transfer

Though all the participants' previous writing experiences were dissimilar to their research essay writing process, they nevertheless drew from past writing experiences to complete this project. Comments like the following remarks by Suman illustrate this:

> …in Nepal, what we do is just go to introduction, write the body, and then go to the conclusion. But here, they make us think about the outline, write the first draft, revise it, self-review, receive reviews from peers, revise it again, make some final changes, and then submit the final draft. So, there you go seven steps! But in Nepal, you write. You do not even see it again after you submit it. (Suman, Interview, 05-04-16)

In addition to recognizing a vast difference between the (Nepali) product-focused approach and the (American) process-focused approach, the participants also noted that the process approach helped improve their writing skills. Even though their past writing experiences had few similarities with the tasks they were now asked to pursue, the participants stated that they nevertheless used ideas they had learned prior to college. Participants described Nepali writing as characterized by long, complex sentence structure, in stark contrast to the clear and concise style preferred in the US university context. From their Nepali education, they knew certain fundamental sections they would be required to include in the different parts of their essay: the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Thus, they described their experience as bolstering their

college research writing despite the new assignment's unfamiliarity. One of the participants, Kabita, described the matter in this way: "I still remember practicing hooks and thesis statements when I was preparing for language tests like the TOEFL and IELTS" (Interview, 05-03-16). This assertion suggests neither that these participants are in a condition where thy must rely on their L2 knowledge only, nor where they are forced to rely mainly on their L1. Instead, the old knowledge supplemented the new. EFL writing contexts may have more dissimilarities than similarities with the US university writing context, but many of the participants, including Suman and Kabita, expressed the idea that past writing expertise informed their contemporary writing. This aligns with Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2008) conclusion—that students' previous writing experiences affects their current writing.

5.2.2 Multilingual writing strategies

The individual interview revealed that most of the participants used the following types of strategies: putting codes or short notes on either side of the readings in Nepali while reviewing the literature for their research essay assignment, guessing meaning from the context, summarizing, becoming culturally aware, cooperating with their home country friends to give feedback, and evaluating one's progress. Such activities mirrored Canagarajah's (2010) assertion that "Multilingual writers, like everyone else, come with multiple identities" (p. 175). Thus, the genre of the writing assignment affected these participants less than the writing context. This is further supported by the comment from Gopal: "Since I grew up in a Nepali environment, I try to think of the topic in a Nepali context, but the culture and all other things are completely different than the US. There are many things that are different" (Gopal, Interview, 05-04-16).

Here, it bears speculating that if these participants were not the multilingual writers, their writing strategies may not have been as diverse as the ones observed. When they were asked why they used their L1s while writing in English, many of them shared that that was how they educated themselves as they grew up. As Matsuda (2001) notes, "In order to construct their voice in their target language, then, L2 writers need to develop a personal repertoire of discursive features and strategies in the language" (p. 51). This might provide an explanation for why the participants in this study expressed such a strong connection to their L1. Such a connection is important because writers often form and establish their own authorial presence by associating themselves with other sets of discursive practices (Clark & Ivanic, 1997).

5.2.3 L1 for text comprehension

One similarity shared by all the participants was using Nepali to comprehend difficult English texts during the research writing process. Participants spoke more poignantly about their writing strategies, as represented by Puran's response below:

> When I study and research, I try to understand [the text] by translating it into Nepali. If there are certain unfamiliar words, I translate them into Nepali. You cannot explain [the text] if you haven't understood it well. To understand the things, I sometimes translate the concept into my language. Then, I start writing in English. I better understand the topic when I translate it into Nepali. (Puran, Interview, 05-06-16)

> Puran's use of L1 allowed him to better comprehend the assigned readings and tasks. This is a strong indicator that bilingual and multilingual writers' L1 and/or L1 culture plays significant roles in certain stages (i.e., text comprehension, topic generation, and formation of ideas) of their L2 writing process. According to Ortega and Carson (2010), multicompetent writers "negotiate multiple cultural and educational influences in the development of their composing abilities" (p. 55). Researchers have also suggested that "students' transnational linguistic experiences and identifications inform in complex and significant ways their research and writing strategies" (Jarratt et al., 2006, p. 24). Being multilingual writers helped the participants comprehend the idea they were asked to write about, allowed them to view the topic from more than one perspective, and, eventually, helped them write better.

Conclusions

This study examined the perceptions and practice of Nepali multilingual writers' L1 use with a shared English-only educational background in a research writing assignment at an American university. Monolingual tyrants cannot stop multilinguals to enhance their positive perception to their multilingual repertoire and foster the mobilization of their multiple languages. Even though the participants' prior educators viewed the use of Nepali pejoratively, this study confirmed that Nepali multilingual writers perceive their cross-linguistic and cross-cultural experience as a resource rather than a hindrance. Although these participants' contemporary writing practices did not match those they were familiar with from Nepal, their prior English-only school experiences did not lead them to treat their L1 and L2 separately during the writing process. Instead, their multilingual writing practices enhanced their writing skills in the American university context. The Nepali writers' multilingual repertoire helped them by allowing them to pursue diverse

writing strategies that informed the way they handled various phases of the L2 research writing process (e.g., topic selection, drafting, proofreading, etc.).

As writing teachers and administrators, we should aim to pursue pedagogies that are not linguistically biased but create an environment that allows multilingual writers to mobilize their multilingual repertoire. It is crucial, of course, for writing teachers to create writing atmosphere that allow writers to utilize their fullest linguistic abilities which is always diverse and unique. As one of my findings suggests, multilingual writers fully benefit when they are grouped together based on their similar L1 and cultural backgrounds. This should be carried out in the different occasions in writing classroom as much as possible, such as during the peer consultations, in group work assignments, and in in-class activities. In doing so, the writing instructors can also benefit from the diversity of their classroom without being the sole point of contact for all kinds of students concerns.

When multilingual writers' composing strategies show overlap between/among two (or more than two) linguistic repertoires, it can be counterproductive to force them to draw upon a single language proficiency (as is done in Nepal). Instead, our pedagogies should be guided by a multilingual mindset. Similarly, as our pedagogies become open to other languages, we should also be considerate of our teaching context and environment as well. We teachers must be aware of the pedagogy of particularity, (i.e., the situated context) of our learners and should reflect this in the educational environment we foster. Our "language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538). Similarly, our feedback and assessment should be grounded to those writers without necessarily being guided by any preconceived stereotypical teaching philosophy that might impede writers' creative acts of composing.

Many studies that examine multilingual writers' writing skill development, including this one, correlate writing skill with English language proficiency. There is a need to decentralize the focus of writing research by ceasing to treat English as a "default." More research should investigate how multilingual writers utilize their ethnic languages (i.e., their L1s) while writing in any of their L2s, such as in the South Asian languages of Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Bangla, or Sinhala. Because of the socio-political context of each of these languages play, the results of such studies would be of great interest, as the status of these languages is not like that of English, and thus they are less well-studied. As indicated by Garcia (2017), power, identity, and L1-L2 similarities could also play a significant role in terms of academic written discourse, as this study suggests. She contends, "Acquiring insights on how certain identity features affect L2 writers is crucial to teachers because it can help us to better understand students' investment and struggles and, consequently, make our practices more inclusive…" (p. 596). Academic written discourse also need not only refer to writing that takes place at the university or

professional level. Finally, many English learners in South Asia (and elsewhere) would benefit from research on issues relevant to lower levels of language competence, like beginning or intermediate proficiencies.

One limitation of this study is the limited number of participants. Although a low number of participants can afford the opportunity for research to be more specific and locally situated, having a larger sample, on the other hand, would have made the research participants' responses more diverse and would have helped maintain the reliability of the data samples. Another possible limitation relates to the data sources this study triangulated its results from (the questionnaire, written artifacts, and interviews). Having used other data sources (i.e., stimulated recall and other genre-specific artifacts) would have added depth to the results. Additionally, using L1 writing samples would have made it possible to analyze the writing assignments in structural terms. For example, it would have been possible to investigate whether the research participants employed their L1 more in the introduction, body paragraphs, or conclusion of their writing assignment. Finally, this study might have benefited from tracking participants' writing tendencies over longer periods of time to generate pseudo-longitudinal result(s). For instance, the writing tendencies of this studies participants ideally might have been studied following their graduation from the FYC course to more advanced courses that also incorporated writing assignments.

Note

1. Participant recruitment and data collection were conducted in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the university's human subjects review board.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. How was your experience working with the research paper in English is a difficult task?
2. If you could choose Nepali or English to write an academic research paper, which would you choose and why?
3. Do you use Nepali while writing in English? If yes, at what writing stage(s) do you use it and why? If no, why do you not use Nepali while writing in English?
4. Are you a better writer because you can write in two different languages? Why or why not?
5. At what stage in the research writing process do you feel most successful? Why?

Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions

1. How many languages can you speak/write? Which language did you learn first at school? How long have you been studying English?
2. What language do you prefer to write in and why?
3. How was your experience writing a research assignment in your English 101 class? Why do you think so?
4. Would you write the same research paper better if you were asked to write in your first language? Why or why not?
5. What do you enjoy about writing in your L1? How about in English? Why?
6. How do you start writing in English? Do you follow any certain strategies or steps? How do these strategies/steps differ from writing in Nepali? Why do you think this is the case?
7. Do you think that Nepali is useful while writing a research assignment in English? Why or why not?
8. Did you seek help while writing this research assignment? If yes, what kind of help did you seek? If no, why did you not seek help?
9. Did you discuss your research writing assignment with a classmate who is from your home country? If yes, why? How did it help in your writing process? If no, why not?
10. Tell me how you used Nepali while creating this outline/draft/final manuscript.
11. In what way did Nepali influence the introduction/body/conclusion of this research assignment?