

A Case Study on the Impact of Weblogs on the Writing of Low-Level Learners in the University of Chile

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Abstract

Since the turn of the century the use of computer-mediated-communication (CMC) has become more widespread in educational contexts and weblogs (blogs), one of the more popular forms of CMC (Bloch, 2007), have been the focus of numerous studies. However, whilst these studies have listed the potential benefits of blog use for language learners, few studies have offered any practical tips for educators who wish to implement the use of writing blogs in the EFL classroom. Moreover, the vast majority of studies have focused on the use of blogs with relatively high-level learners in academic contexts. This small-scale study focuses on how the use of blogs impact on the writing of a group of low-level learners in a tertiary EFL context in Chile. Moreover, it presents a tentative model to explain the different factors that contribute to writing development using weblogs as these learners grapple “*not only with a written code but with a linguistic code that is still being acquired.*” (Raimes, 1985: 232). The findings report that blogs have the potential to aid low-level learners develop their L2 writing and a number of suggestions are made that may help practitioners facilitate the process.

List of Abbreviations

Blogs	Weblogs
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
L1	First language
L2	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

Of all the second language (L2) skills that learners have to master, writing is seen to be the most difficult (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 303). This may go some way to explaining why writing is considered to be more prestigious than spoken language, especially in academic contexts but also in society in general, and why L2 learners are frequently judged on their ability to write in an L2 as opposed to speaking it (Harris (1993). Surprisingly then, under the banner of the communicative approach to teaching and learning, more emphasis has been placed on oral production in the EFL classroom (Leja, 2007) and writing has often been afforded no more than a passing mention with regards SLA (Harklau, 2002). However, recent developments in the way people communicate in a ‘Networked world’ have highlighted new literacy’s and new genres of writing that are changing all areas of society including education (Dippold, 2009). Moreover, the language learning benefits of asynchronous computer-mediated-communication (CMC) have contributed to a change in the traditional definitions of language learning (see Kern *et al.*, 2008), which has led to a reevaluation of the value of second language writing. According to Godwin-Jones (2008) online tools and websites offer “*new opportunities and incentives for personal writing*” (p. 7) that language teachers need to tap into.

This study looks at the impact of weblogs, a popular form of CMC, on the writing of a group of low-level EFL learners in a tertiary context in the University of Chile. The present chapter, Chapter 1, is the introduction. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant

research literature which, due to the number of areas to be covered, is broken down into seven sections:

- ICT, CALL & CMC
- Written CMC
- Developing L2 Writing
- Developing Writing with Low-Level Learners
- A Background to Blogs
- The Use of Blogs in the Foreign Language Classroom
- Blogs and EFL Writing

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and includes information pertaining to the research question, the research style, the participants and the contents of the study, and data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the findings and Chapter 5 rounds up the proceedings in the form of a conclusion and recommendations for future research. Additionally, it presents a tentative model of blog impact based on the findings in this study.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter takes a look at literature relevant to the current study in a top-down approach, moving from the big picture to the single frame. It begins by establishing the role of technology in language learning (2.1) before focusing on written CMC (2.2). Sections 2.3 and 2.4 discuss the development of L2 writing and developing writing with low-level learners respectively. The remaining sections (2.5, 2.6 and 2.7) look at a background to blogs, the use of blogs in the L2 classroom, and blogs and EFL writing in that order.

2.1 ICT, CALL and CMC

The use of the computer as a language learning tool has undergone drastic changes in a relatively short space of time. Basic mechanical language learning drills were devised for computer use as early as the 1960s but more recent developments in information and communication technology (ICT), especially that of the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW), have led to a change in the way computers are used in the language learning process (Warschauer and Healey, 1998).

One of the most significant changes with regards the use of computers in language learning has been the shift from the use of the computer as a tool for individual language practice to the use of computers for authentic communication. This change came about in the early nineties as increased access to the Internet presented opportunities for language

learners to engage in autonomous, worldwide computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Chapelle, 2001:23)

There are two forms of CMC: synchronous or real-time communication, such as telephoning or instant chat, and asynchronous or delayed communication, such as email and weblogs (blogs). Both forms allow learners the opportunity to engage in authentic communication with native speakers of the language they wish to learn around the clock and often at virtually no cost. As a result, CMC has had a much greater impact on language teaching than other forms of CALL (Delcloque, 2007).

What is particularly interesting about the new CMC tools and applications is the fact that they have been adapted for use in the language classroom as opposed to being designed as language learning tools per se. As Beetham and Sharpe (2007) state, “*Most young people in Western societies make routine use of Internet and email, text messaging and social software, and their familiarity with these new forms of exchange are carried over into their learning.*” (p. 5)

Chapelle (2004), in a review of second language research on learning through online communication, draws various positive conclusions that tapping into this familiarity may afford. Firstly, L2 communication practice online may aid learners L2 performance in other (non-online) contexts. Secondly, learners have been seen to engage in the negotiation of form and meaning during online communication which is considered effective in leading learners to notice gaps in their interlanguage and thus aid acquisition (see Swain, 1998). Thirdly, online communication has reportedly aided the development of a variety of language competences (syntactic, pragmatic and intercultural). Finally,

online communication has a language learning potential beyond that of the teacher merely using it as a means of constructing collaborative classroom tasks because learners can use it in different ways outside the classroom depending on their knowledge, resourcefulness and second language proficiency. To emphasize this final point, Chapelle (2004) draws from an ethnographic case study by Lam (2000) which describes the CMC experience of a teenage Chinese immigrant in the United States. The subject had struggled to make L2 learning progress via traditional classroom methods but eventually improved his language skills by participating in a chat network which allowed him to overcome the frustration and alienation he had previously felt in his high school environment.

However, as Bax (2000) points out, technology and language teaching have not always been easy bedfellows and he warns against technology being considered an easy solution for complex problems. An observation by Warschauer (1996) expresses similar sentiments in a more positive manner; *“those who expect to get magnificent results simply from the purchase of expensive and elaborate systems will likely be disappointed. But those who put computer technology to use in the service of good pedagogy will undoubtedly find ways to enrich their educational program and the learning opportunities of their students.”* (p. 29)

This section has discussed the development of ICT in the language learning classroom with special attention to CMC. It has highlighted some of the potential benefits of using online communication in the language classroom as discussed by Chapelle (2004). The subsequent section looks at specific factors related to the potential of CMC for promoting writing in a collaborative environment.

2.2 Written CMC – Writing in a Collaborative Environment

Findings from comparative research imply that learners on computer-mediated courses tend to be more motivated and more prolific writers (Greene, 2000) yet few studies have focused on CMC in relation to second language writing. Warschauer (1997) discusses CMC from a socio-cultural perspective to explore collaborative learning in the classroom and to evaluate the potential of CMC to promote collaborative language learning. To do so, he draws on Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis - whereby L2 development is charged by the comprehensible input a learner receives – Long's (1981) work on the Interaction Hypothesis – which suggests that interactional negotiated meaning has more potential for individual learner development - and Swain's (1985) notion of the Output Hypothesis- whereby language production pushes learners to notice gaps in their own production (Mitchell and Myles, 2004). This section mirrors Warschauer's study with the aim of discussing CMC's potential for promoting writing in a collaborative environment.

Warschauer (1997) identifies five features that differentiate written CMC from other forms of communication media. He lists these as:

a) text-based and computer-mediated interaction

b) many-to-many communication

c) time-and place-independence

d) long distances exchanges

e) hypermedia links

(From Warschauer, 1997: 470)

The following section discusses each feature (*a-e*) in more detail.

a) Warschauer (1997) explains how the two main functions of language¹, communicative interaction and the interpretation of experience to make meaning, now occur in (written) text-based mode. Moreover, he claims that the ability of CMC to unite “*the interactional and reflective aspects of language*” (Warschauer, 1997: 472) has surmounted the traditional division between the spoken and written word, and that, thanks to CMC “*human interaction now takes place in text-based form.*” (Warschauer, 1997: 472). Furthermore, as this interaction is “*easily transmitted, stored, archived, reevaluated, edited and rewritten*” (1997: 472) it holds intriguing possibilities for language learners who can hone in on specific features of their production. The combination of these facts leads Warschauer (1997) to proclaim that “*The computer-mediated feature of online writing has finally unleashed the interactive power of text-based communication.*” (1997: 471).

b) Many-to-many communication refers to the fact that in CMC the potential for simultaneous participation is unlimited and that this creates opportunities for the construction of knowledge. Furthermore, it omits various face-to-face formalities (e.g. turn-taking) which allows for a more balanced participation (e.g. by removing power roles or context clues of social hierarchy). This point is backed up by reference to studies by Sullivan and Pratt (1996), Kern (1995b) and Kelm (1992) which report on increased and more balanced participation by learners engaged in online communication. Chapelle (2001) also highlights this benefit referring to studies by Beauvois (1998) and Markley (1998) that “*have shown the written non-face-to-face discussion of the CMC diminishes the effect of individual differences that may hamper communication in the classroom, thereby resulting in more comprehensible output produced by those who would otherwise*

¹ According to Halliday

produce little” Chapelle (2001: 82). This point is particularly relevant given that output is generally regarded as an essential factor in improving fluency (Mitchell and Myles, 2004), and the increasing frequency with which the role of written output is being linked to SLA (Zaki and Ellis, 1999; Weissberg, 2000; Riechelt, 2001; Harklau, 2002) especially when referring to Instructed SLA. In addition, the interaction and knowledge construction learners engage in by means of CMC has led researchers (e.g. Warschauer, 1997; Kern, 2000; Chapelle, 2001; Hyland, 2003) to point out the link to Vygotskian theories of collaborative learning whereby learners can develop their knowledge through interaction with a more knowledgeable other. This takes place in what is known as the *zone of proximal development (ZPD)*, a sphere of developing knowledge or skill in which a learner needs scaffolded assistance due to an inability to function independently (Mitchell and Myles, 2004). In language learning this help is normally provided by a teacher but peer group interaction also permits the construction of a ZPD whereby collective knowledge resides in the group rather than in an individual member (Nassaji and Cumming, 2000). According to Kern *et al.* (2008) CMC encourages learners’ sense of “*collaborative spirit*” (p. 282), a claim that is duly supported by the number of practitioners and researchers who have reported the value of CMC as a means of increasing collaborative peer interaction (Ducate and Lomicka, 2008), especially through peer feedback (Dippold, 2009). Moreover, Swain and Lapkin (1998) suggest that in collaborative interaction language is used by learners as a tool for mediating. Subsequently, they present evidence to support the claim that collaborative peer interaction aids both learning and communicating.

c) Time-place independence highlights the flexibility of online communication thanks to the development of mobile devices with 24-hour access. This affords learners time to

carry out more profound analysis and critical reflection of the texts they produce, as well as the possibility of initiating communication outside the classroom with their peers or teacher (Warschauer (1997: 474). Various researchers, most notably Swain (1985, 1995), consider analysis and reflection of output to be extremely beneficial to language development and, arguably, are factors that promote SLA. Swain's three functions of learner output are summed up by Mitchell and Myles (2004) who state that Swain is of the opinion that:

the activity of producing the target language may push learners to become aware of gaps and problems in their second language system (first function); it provides them with opportunities to reflect on, discuss and analyse these problems explicitly (third function); and of course, it provides them with opportunities to experiment with new structures and forms (second function). (Mitchell and Myles, 2004: 174).

d) Long distance exchanges refers to the fact that online communication is now more long reaching and learners now have opportunities for interaction on a global scale. Here Warschauer (1997) refers to a number of online exchange projects that involved email and the WWW. As noted earlier, long-distance exchanges afford access to a worldwide audience and the possibility of interaction with target language users on a daily basis, twenty-four hours a day (Delcloque, 2007). This is particularly beneficial in an EFL context as it increases the possibility of learners being involved in authentic interaction which is seen as paramount to the development of effective strategies for writing (Hyland, 2003: 40).

e) The final feature Warschauer (1997) refers to is that of hypermedia links which connect different types of media (text, data, graphics, audio and video) on a common theme in a non-sequential fashion and allows the user to browse them at will, thus demanding new writing and reading strategies (Kern 2000: 227). Warschauer (1997)

describes a long-distance collaboration between two groups of EFL students in Poland to elaborate a bilingual multimedia document for publication on the web. Student correspondence was via email and benefits from this form of CMC are said to include *“heightened authenticity in writing and increased student collaboration, audience awareness, willingness to revise, and motivation”* (Warschauer, 2003, in Matsuda et al, 2003: 163). However, whilst hypertext may be a useful language learning resource, it is not a true means of authentic communication although it requires new reading and writing strategies (Kern, 2000: 237/227). In this sense, it is more recent web-based applications, such as blogs, that *“have precipitated changes in modes and uses of writing online”* (Godwin-Jones, 2008) with the aforementioned interactive power that Warschauer (1997) proclaims.

This section has looked at the potential of CMC in promoting writing in a collaborative environment, paying particular attention to five features that differentiate written CMC from other forms of communication media as highlighted by Warschauer (1997). However, in order to understand the full scope of L2 writing and what it entails, the following section discusses writing from a more traditional perspective focusing on the development of L2 writing and the theories and approaches that inform current pedagogy.

2.3 Developing L2 Writing

Over the last twenty years second language writing research has increased notably (Leki, 2000; Cumming, 2001; Harlau, 2002) with three principal dimensions of research informing instruction since the middle of the twentieth century: features of learner texts (product approach), the composing processes learners use (process approach), and the

sociocultural contexts in which the writing takes place (social oriented approaches) (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Cumming 2001, Hyland 2002).

The product approach, as it suggests, concentrates on the finished writing product by looking at texts with regard to surface elements (e.g. syntax, morphology) and the text structure (Cumming, 2000; Hyland, 2003). According to Hyland (p. 7), writing in a product based approach is no more than an extension of grammar with *“little to do with the fact that communication, and not absolute accuracy, is the purpose of writing”* (p 8). Typical classroom activities include grammar study, error analysis, sentence building, patterns of paragraph arrangement, and copying prescribed features of texts (see Kern, 2000). Once L2 learners could produce accurate sentences and had the ability to form paragraphs they would receive similar writing instruction to L1 writers. It was not until the end of the 1960s when dissatisfaction with the results from this approach led to the introduction of new theories (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

Towards the end of the 1970s, the process approach shifted the focus from the text to the writer and the different processes involved in composing a text. Whilst they are aware that not all researchers and practitioners would agree with them, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) claim that the process approach is best understood from a historical perspective and point to four key stages that have informed L2 writing research: The expressive stage, the cognitive stage, the social stage, and the discourse community stage (p. 88). Each stage can be seen as having developed as a means of incorporating new insights from a previous stage or stages, although not all practitioners and researchers have abandoned previous stages. Instructional practices associated with process approaches include; relevant topics, multiple drafting, peer-feedback and meaningful communication

rather than writing as a practice activity (see Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). However, criticism of this approach has highlighted, amongst other things, a general disregard to the effect of the sociocultural context on the writing process, and a leaning towards certain culturally defined academic genres which may hinder the progress of some learners (See Kern, 2000).

The third of the general approaches to writing focuses on the context of L2 writing and the role it plays in allowing writers access to discourse communities through paying attention to audience expectations. In this sense, rather than being a product of text or the cognitive process of the writer, writing is a means of social interaction. According to Cumming (2000), in this approach *“writing in a second language forms a focus for individuals to learn ways of cooperating with and seeking assistance from diverse people and resource; to adapt to and reflect on new situations, knowledge and abilities; to negotiate relations of work and power; and gain and modify new senses of self.”*(p. 7).

However, despite the prominence of these approaches and much research, no clear cut answer to the question of how L2 writing should be taught has emerged (Hyland, 2003: 78), leading Grabe and Kaplan (1996) to proclaim that *“L2 writing is so varied and distinct from situation to situation that a general theory of L2 writing may not be possible”* (p. 144). This appears to be because the factors involved in attaining writing expertise are not clearly understood due to the process being seen as complex, context dependant and, to a large extent, badly defined (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). As Richards and Renandya (2002) explain, *“L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice and so on”*. Furthermore, Weissberg (2000) suggests various interrelated factors

come into play regarding writing proficiency development listing; the learner's L1 writing expertise, previous writing experience in educational contexts, and overall language proficiency. Moreover, he signals that these factors differ for each learner depending on "*differences in age, gender, personality, learning style and the oracy-literacy bias of the learner's home culture*" (2000: 37).

Traditionally, differences between L1 writing and L2 writing have been a principal starting point for many discussions on writing in a second language (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000: 6) and, subsequently, a starting point for writing instruction. For the main part, up until the early 1980's L2 writing pedagogy was informed by L1 research (Krapels, 1990) and L2 writers were seen to behave like less competent L1 writers (Grabe & Kaplan 1996:141). However, Raimes (1985) warns against treating L2 writers the same as L1 writers and states that the two processes are "*startlingly different*" (1985, 232).

Research carried out by Silva (1993) on a group of adult L2 writers reports that:

- L1 readers found L2 writing to be simpler, less efficient and different to L1 writing.
- Despite similarities, composing patterns were less efficient, more limited and more complicated.
- L2 writers planned less and had trouble with goal setting and the generation and organization of content.
- Transcription lacked fluency and was less productive but involved more hard work.
- Despite revising their writing more, L2 writers spent less time reviewing, rereading or reflecting on their texts.

- Overall, texts were shorter, contained more errors and obtained lower scores when tested holistically.

In a rather exhaustive study of research findings (that also serves to demonstrate how wide reaching L2 writing research has been), Silva (1993) lists 42 morphosyntactical differences (20 stylistic and 22 linguistic) and 14 lexicosemantic differences that researchers have identified when comparing the writing of L1 and L2 writers leading him to conclude, somewhat ironically, that while similarities exist, there are “*numerous and important differences*” (p. 671). Moreover, as Raimes (1985) points out, what differentiates L2 writers from their L1 counterparts is that they are struggling with a linguistic code in a state of acquisition, and a written code simultaneously. According to Hyland (2003),

Fundamentally, writing is learned, rather than taught, and the teacher’s best methods are flexibility and support. This means responding to the specific instructional context, particularly the age, first language and experience of the students, their writing purposes, and their target writing communities, and providing extensive encouragement in the form of meaningful contexts, peer involvement, prior texts, useful feedback and guidance in the writing process. (Hyland, 2003: 78)

Harris (1993) describes writing instruction as “*a vast and complex subject*” (p. xiii) and the range of factors mentioned by Hyland (2003) go some way to demonstrating this vastness and complexity. After an attempt to build a model of adult L2 instruction Cumming and Riazi (2000) report that they were unable to identify “*the principal variables that influence learning to write in a second language or in clarifying how such variables interrelate to produce students’ achievement in second-language writing.*” (p. 68). Determining development in L2 writing is complex. Rater-based holistic impressions of student writing lack the precision to be useful in evaluating long term

advances. Additionally, controversy exists regarding the kind of writing that constitutes a representative sample (Cumming and Riazi, 2000).

Consequently, there are few clear indications of what teachers should do in the language classroom as there is scant information on how people learn to write in an L2 or the effect teaching has on the process. As a result, rather than adhere to explicit models of L2 writing that cover the full range of aspects related to the learning and instruction, the majority of instructed L2 writing is based on traditions of process or product approaches, or both (Cumming and Riazi, 2000). An example of this is found in *Teaching Writing Skills* by Donn Byrne (1979). The author dedicates a chapter to developing skills but makes no reference to what skills he is referring to or how they will be developed. Furthermore, under a section entitled *The importance of demonstrating progress* he is limited to suggesting, somewhat cryptically, that if the learners are able to carry out the activities in the previous chapter then “*they will be conscious of having made a certain amount of progress*” (1979: 51). Ultimately, Byrne (1979) offers no more than a collection of writing activities that offer practice in the ‘skill of writing.’

However, other authors do make concrete suggestions. Silva (1993) proposes that instruction should promote planning, transcribing, and reviewing based on learners’ writing expertise and language resources. Furthermore, he advocates a focus on audience expectations, unfamiliar textual patterns and task types, along with work on enhancing grammatical and lexical resources. Brown (1994) identifies a number of written language characteristics from a writer’s perspective that serve as a basis for learner development, related to writing fluency, audience, orthography, complexity (grammatical and lexical), vocabulary and formality. Harris (1993) draws on Krashen (1984) to state that planning

and revising and re-reading are habits of good writers that should be encouraged in order to increase learners' chances of successful and satisfactory writing.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) offer what is one of the most extensive and detailed discussions of instructional practices offering descriptions of techniques and ideas at 3 different levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced). They offer a framework for an idealized curriculum inspired by Raimes (1991) that combines elements of product, process, and social context approaches along with subject-matter content. Moreover, they specify teacher roles that draw on "*meta-cognitive strategy research, research on the development of expertise, and Vygotskian views on literacy learning.*" (p. 262) Planning, revision, drafting, learner selected tasks and feedback are just a few of the elements they advocate, complemented by a list of 75 themes for writing instruction, 25 for each of the aforementioned levels, that range from using print in the classroom (beginner) to style and the individual writer (advanced).

Ultimately, the solution to the dilemma presented by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) regarding a general theory of writing may well lie outside the traditional limits of writing theory. One interesting approach from a literacy perspective is that presented by Kern (2000) who introduces the concept of Available Designs (defined as meaning making resources) whereby writers draw on whatever resources are available to them from a continuum that ranges from linguistic resources to schematic resources, and that are activated in unison with procedural knowledge depending on the demands of the sociocultural context.

Kern (2000) explains that L1 and L2 writing, whilst not the same, involve similar processes with the distinction that writing in an L2 is complicated by new rules and

resources. However, the learning of new structures and writing norms adds to the learner's repertoire of Available Designs affording them the luxury of being able to draw on a wider range of writing resources to match the complexity of writing tasks they need to perform. Moreover, learners will make use of resources indiscriminately, regardless of which language they were acquired in originally (Kern, 2000). Backing up his claims with numerous examples from researchers (e.g. Lay, 1982; Zamel, 1982; Uzawa and Cumming, 1995), who report on L2 writers mixing and matching their resources or "*borrowing*" from their native language (including proficient L2 writers), Kern (2000) makes a convincing case. With regards to instruction he calls for a combination of product (focus on the text), process (focus on the individual) and genre-based approaches (focus on the social context) and claims that all three "*are essential in a comprehensive pedagogy of literacy*" (p. 180). A tentative Teaching framework is presented that combines four key components: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice. Situated practice involves learner immersion in the act of making meaning which is described as a crucial factor in developing writing ability (Kern, 2000). It does this by giving learners comprehensive Available Design practice that develops "*fluency and automaticity*" (p. 192) via tasks such as letter writing and journal writing that encourage learners to express their own personal thoughts and ideas. Overt instruction involves helping students plan and organise their texts whilst simultaneously developing more product oriented aspects such as sentence grammar. Critical framing activities attend to the relationships that unite form, context and purpose, and transformed practice looks at ways of redesigning or recreating texts for use in new contexts (Kern, 2000).

Kern's proposal shares some features with the Grabe and Kaplan model (such as combining approaches), however, he insists that this is a literacy based model rather than purely a model of L2 writing (which Grabe and Kaplan strove to establish). Nevertheless, his notion of Available Designs presents a feasible model that addresses some of the problems that so flummoxed Cumming and Riazi (2000) when trying to create of a model of adult L2 writing instruction (see above).

This section began by looking at research into developing L2 writing. It discussed the 3 principal approaches to L2 writing and the difficulties researchers have faced in finding an appropriate model of L2 writing both in terms of development and instruction. Finally, instructional practices were discussed, in particular those proposed by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and Kern (2000). The following section looks at the development of L2 writing with low-level learners.

2.4 Developing Writing with Low-Level Learners

As with other aspects of L2 writing, there are conflicting views on how to guide low-level learners in their quest to become proficient, successful and independent L2 writers. Moreover, there are also conflicting views regarding terminology with what are presumably low-level learners being referred to as unskilled writers (Raimes, 1985), basic writers (Cumming, 1989), less-skilled student writers (Sasaki, 2000), and low proficiency EFL students (Firkins *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) state that *“There is no one group of students that can be labelled as beginning writers. However, there are a number of groups of students who do fit the characteristic of beginners learning to*