

**Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere**  
**Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Scienze del**  
**Linguaggio**  
**Percorso Glottodidattica**  
**Tesi di Laurea**

“Reading and writing fan fiction in English as  
a foreign language: a survey study.”

**Relatore**

Ch. Prof. Carmel Mary Coonan

**Correlatore**

Prof. Graziano Serragiotto

**Laureando**

Elena Rossetti  
Matricola 838977

**Anno Accademico**

**2012 / 2013**

# LIST OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>AKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....   | 5  |
| <b>ABSTRACT</b> .....  | 6  |
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....  | 7  |
| <b>1. MOTIVATION, ANXIETY, ADULT LEARNING &amp; AUTONOMY:<br/>THEORETICAL BACKGROUND</b> |    |
| 1.1. Affective factors in language learning.....   | 8  |
| 1.1.1. Language learning and emotion.....  | 8  |
| 1.1.2. Motivation.....   | 12 |
| 1.1.3. Anxiety.....  | 14 |
| 1.2. Learning in informal environments.....  | 18 |
| 1.3. Andragogy and autonomy.....   | 20 |
| <b>2. READING AND WRITING IN EFL: THE FAN FIC PHENOMENON</b>                             |    |
| 2.1. Reading in a foreign language.....  | 23 |
| 2.1.1 Affective factors in reading.....  | 28 |
| 2.2. Writing in a foreign language.....  | 29 |
| 2.2.1. The writing skill.....  | 32 |
| 2.2.2. Writing in the classroom.....   | 34 |
| 2.2.3. Creative writing.....   | 38 |
| 2.2.4 Affective factors in writing.....  | 40 |
| 2.3. Reading and writing fan fictions.....   | 42 |
| 2.3.1. What is a fan fiction?.....   | 42 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 2.3.2. Where does fan fiction come from?.....             | 43 |
| 2.3.3. Fan fictions and reading in English.....           | 45 |
| 2.3.4. Fan fictions and writing in English.....           | 46 |
| 2.3.5. Fan fictions and language learning motivation..... | 47 |
| 2.3.6. Fan fictions and language learning anxiety.....    | 48 |
| 2.3.7. Fan fiction types and genres.....                  | 49 |
| 2.3.8. Where does one find fan fictions?.....             | 52 |
| 2.3.9. Who writes fan fictions and who read them?.....    | 57 |
| 2.3.10. The multimodality of fan works.....               | 58 |

### **3. THE STUDY**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 3.1. Research hypothesis and research questions..... | 61 |
| 3.2. Subjects of the study.....                      | 62 |
| 3.3. Multiple-case research.....                     | 62 |
| 3.4. Data collecting procedure.....                  | 64 |
| 3.4.1. The preliminary questionnaire.....            | 64 |
| 3.4.2. The open form questionnaire.....              | 65 |
| 3.5. Methods of data analysis.....                   | 66 |

### **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 4.1. Data from the preliminary questionnaire.....                   | 67 |
| 4.2. Data from the questionnaire.....                               | 67 |
| 4.2.1. Data concerning motivation.....                              | 67 |
| 4.2.2. Data concerning anxiety.....                                 | 71 |
| 4.2.3. Data concerning competences: the educational background..... | 78 |
| 4.2.4. Data concerning competences: the reading skill.....          | 80 |
| 4.2.4. Data concerning competences: the writing skill.....          | 86 |

4.3. Fan fictions in formal and informal language learning environments .....91

**5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

5.1. Implications about motivation.....94  
5.2. Implications about writing apprehension.....96  
5.3. Implications about receptive and productive written skills.....99  
5.4. Limitations and further research.....103

**REFERENCES.....104**

**APPENDIX I. The Preliminary Questionnaire.....118**

**APPENDIX II. The Questionnaire.....119**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been written without the help of several people.

First of all, Professor Coonan who was intrigued by the topic of fan fictions and helped me through the research and editing stages of the thesis.

I would also like to thank my family for their constant support and my therapists for the professional help they provided me with, thanks to which I overcame the anxiety of writing this dissertation.

I thank all of my friends and the people on the Internet who have been so kind as to fill in and send me back the questionnaire, making the research itself possible. Moreover, their enthusiasm about the topic I chose kept me going even when I doubted the quality of my work.

The biggest thank you of all, though, goes to me.

To myself, for not giving up and admitting I needed help. For putting aside, for a while, the fear about the future and focusing on writing these pages.

For silencing the perfectionist voice in my head who kept telling me this was no good.

For proving it wrong.

## ABSTRACT

Starting from the researcher's assumption that fan fictions can be useful in English language learning, either in a formal or in an informal learning environment, this study attempts to give an answer to the following question "Can writing and/or reading fan fiction in EFL help language learning and foster a positive attitude towards the language itself?"

To accomplish said purpose, two preliminary open-form questionnaires of 11 (writers' questionnaire) and 7 (readers' questionnaire) questions were devised and shared on the Internet. The response showed that learners older than 19, rather than people in middle or high school, seem to be the most willing to share their personal experience regarding fan fics. Consequently, another open-form questionnaire, made up of 39 questions, was devised and uploaded on the Internet.

The analysis of the 35 questionnaires that have been compiled shows that most of the subjects share the researcher's assumption and claim to have been motivated to improve their English language skills (through reading and writing) as well as actually learning a lot of English vocabulary and figures of speech (mainly through reading). This, I believe, can be the starting point for further research, through the study of specifically designed case studies, on how fan fiction helps English language learning.

**Keywords:** fanfiction, internet, auto-apprendimento, LS, scrittura

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to investigate whether or not reading and writing fan fictions can affect different aspect of foreign language learning (FLL).

To accomplish such a task, the dissertation has been divided into five chapters.

In Chapter 1, theoretical backgrounds about motivation and anxiety – along with adult informal learning, due to the age of most people involved in the research itself – are discussed.

Then, in the first part of Chapter 2, the reading and the writing skills are examined. The second part of the chapter, instead, deals with the fan fiction phenomenon. It describes what it is and explains who are the people involved with it.

The research hypothesis and research questions are presented in Chapter 3. Moreover, the chapter illustrates the study in details addressing the subject involved, the type of research that has been carried, data collecting procedures and methods of data analysis.

In Chapter 4, data from questionnaires are analyzed, looking for pattern that can help answering the research question.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, deals with the implications drawn from the data analyzed.

Implications about motivation, about writing apprehension, about receptive and productive writing skill.

To conclude, limitations and possibilities for further research are presented.

# CHAPTER 1 - MOTIVATION, ANXIETY, ADULT LEARNING & AUTONOMY: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## 1.1. Affective factors in language learning

Learning, due to the reliance it has on communication between people even when it is informal and autonomous, has to be thought as an activity influenced by macro environmental factors such as the socio-cultural milieu where it takes place and micro environmental ones, for example the *motivation* that each individual might have to acquire knowledge and which sustains the learning itself.

Moreover, learning can be a demanding and frustrating task. When dealing with a foreign language (FL), students might feel as if they were still babbling little babies, because they lack the lexical and syntactical knowledge and competence and therefore cannot articulate the same meaningful concepts they would be able to convey in their own mother tongue (L1). Foreigners have to slow down their speech so that the FL learner can understand, and that can be demeaning for said learner, especially if he/she thought to be quite proficient in the language at school.

Approaching a text written in a FL can be disorienting too, if the learners insist on knowing the meaning of each and every word

they are reading instead of concentrating on getting the gist of it.

These difficulties can lead to a feeling of inadequacy, or *anxiety*, which is going to be one of the focuses of our research. Also, how anxiety and the development of reading and writing competence in a FL, in our case English, are related is another topic we are going to investigate.

### 1.1.1. Language learning and emotion

Despite the numerous studies about motivation and anxiety, MacIntyre (2002: 45) pointed out that emotion had not been given a prominent role in the language learning (from now on referred to as “LL”) literature, even though it is the basis of these phenomena. He also claims that the role of emotion in language learning, aside from specific outcomes like motivation, anxiety and attitudes has not been studied in depth yet.

Likewise, Balboni (2013: 6) argues that the dichotomy ‘reason vs. emotion’ that is present in so many studies is insufficient to describe the influence emotion has on language acquisition.

Certainly, a good deal of our literary education has described these two elements as irreconcilable. Just think back to Greek classics, where emotions were the downfall of heroes and they succeeded when reason prevailed, as Ulysses did in the *Iliad* or in the middle ages when emotions would drive you mad (as in Shakespeare's *Othello*) and condemn your soul to Hell because positive feelings



could easily turn into capital sins.

Even during Romanticism, Balboni insists (ibid: 2-4), emotion needs to be reined in by reason. From the 1970s, though, thanks to Star Trek (a TV show that also led to the birth of fan domain, or 'fandom', as we will discuss in Chapter 3) the emotions personified by instinct-driven Captain Kirk are the ones that have the upper hand on the cold and harsh rationality, embodied by Doctor Spock. Nowadays, on the other hand, we are witnessing again the prevailing of reason over emotions. The latter, in fact, are seen as the driving force of criminals in the most famous and critically praised procedural dramas<sup>1</sup>.

However, as shown by Goleman (1996) in his *Emotional Intelligence*, emotion and reason are not at odds with each other but are bound together, influencing the appraisal and the receptivity of the input given. According to Balboni (2013: 7) a much more efficient distinction could be the one proposed by Greek philosophers more than two thousand years ago:

- a) eros (love; in our case pleasure in LL)
- b) pathos (sufferance / anxiety)
- c) epithymia (desire / motivation)

In terms of language acquisition it means that teachers should:

1) keep in mind **eros** creating a nice environment, where LL is not felt merely as a duty but is associated with positive feelings (having fun, challenging oneself and the classmates without any kind of pressure, discovering and systematizing lexis and syntax, achieving short and long term goals). To accomplish this, they should follow the theories about input appraisal by Arnold (1960) developed further by Schumann (1997) - that underline the importance of novelty of materials and contents (as much as possible, given that the teacher has a curriculum to follow and that something too unusual and not properly introduced to students might raise a feeling of uneasiness in learners), their relevance to the learners needs, the feasibility of the tasks requested and that said tasks do not put at risk their self-confidence and social image.

2) be aware of neuroscientific theories that confirm that **pathos** should be avoided. Indeed, fear and anxiety while learning foster the production of stress hormones, which block the production of adrenaline (a neurotransmitter that helps with memorization) and thus it makes it impossible to

---

<sup>1</sup> Procedural drama: “ [...] is a variant of the detective story, which is itself a variant of the mystery, globally speaking. Procedurals filter the ratiocinative action through characters who actively investigate the mystery for the viewer, following procedures that are prescribed by their professions (e.g., police detectives, forensic scientists, etc.)” (Harriss; 2008)

acquire new knowledge (see Balboni, *ibid*).

3) create motivation (**epithymia**), because it will change “the cognitive architecture of the mind and the biochemical structure of the brain.” (see Balboni, *ibid*)

Indeed, a biochemical view is fundamental when dealing with emotion. Also Caon (2006; 26) asserts that motivating and demotivating mechanisms have not only a psychological dimension but are also part of the biological structure of the brain.

Schumann goes as far as stating that:

“the only approach to affective factors in LL is biological, because the motivational machine itself is biological: the stimulus appraisal system has evolved to make it that way.”(1997; p. 178)

He sees the appraisal system as a mechanism made up by three parts: the amygdala, the orbitofrontal cortex and the body proper. The latter works as a link between the amygdala and the orbitofrontal cortex. The orbitofrontal cortex, as explained by Damasio (cited in Schumann, 1997: 46), is also involved in reasoning about social and personal issues. This is quite relevant to LL, as theorized by Gardner and Lambert (1972) in their socio-educational model of motivation. The amygdala is the most involved in stimulus appraisal, since Damasio demonstrates that it is in charge of evaluating the emotional impact of an experience. When it is damaged, according to De Martino et al. (2010), higher risks will be taken regardless of smaller potential gains.

Stimuli will then trigger reaction through the frontal cortex, the region of the brain that controls the motor system, and therefore when they are perceived as threatening the situations that created them will be avoided if possible in the future. Emotional memories, of course, can also deal with pleasant feelings derived from the novelty or familiarity of the tasks and the material used in class. Their formation, as well as stimulus appraisal does not happen only when we are awake but also during REM sleep, which shows how subconscious such processes are.

Pleasure in language learning, therefore, is indispensable if we want the information we give to be retained. Such a concept is highlighted by Balboni (2008), who sees pleasure as the most powerful motivator to learn a FL.

Caon (2006: 41) integrates pleasure in LL within his theory of playful language teaching methodology (PLTM), where the game has specific didactic purposes, which have to be spelled out to the students before engaging in the task. Otherwise learners, especially adults, will feel as if they are wasting their time, because they are used to thinking that learning in general has to be a boring and exhausting task. He believes (*ibid*: 27), indeed, that teachers cannot force knowledge onto the

classroom, but their assignment is to create the environment where their students will feel challenged, rewarded, valued and responsible for their own learning, so that also obligation, the weakest motivation for LL, according to Balboni) can become a powerful tool, out of the sense of duty one might feel in regards to a teacher they admire.

Therefore, teachers write down a learning agreement (*patto formativo*) where the ministerial requests found in the curriculum meet the needs and interests of students. It cannot always be possible, of course. When the topic is not particularly interesting, for example when we are dealing with grammar – speech does not require the same accuracy writing does, so they might not see the point of learning how to use the proper tenses in a sentence – PLTM comes into play. This approach means that teachers should focus on having a playful atmosphere in the classroom, making sure they offer “a highly stimulating and methodologically varied context” (Caon; 2006: 27) , aware that the people they are dealing with do not have the same cognitive styles or learning rhythm.

Linguistic games, which are a part of the PLTM, promote socialization through cooperative learning. They might also promote playful competitiveness, if the students are divided into teams. Games can also be the expression of cultural values: thus we can deliver an intercultural message through them, pointing out differences (in rules or goals) as well as common elements. According to Krashen's (1977) input hypothesis and to the Vygotskian concept of ZPD, we have to make sure the games are neither too complex nor too simple but achievable with the tools the students have at their disposal (learning materials and knowledge of the world around them, for example, as well as what they have learned in the previous lessons).

Music too, as Caon (2010) shows us in detail, can be used as a pleasant medium for LL. Listening to a song, and learning its lyrics, is one of the few situations in which students do not mind repetition and redundancy. Moreover, it tends to affect people emotionally and that makes the learning experience much more meaningful to them.

MacIntyre (2002: 61-62), instead, takes a more theoretical approach to emotion in language learning, by reporting three fundamental studies on the subject. First Tomkins who, in 1970, defined emotion as an amplifier of motivation: it is the fuel that propels an active response to external stimuli, providing urgency and intensity to our behavior. It differs from other primal drives, though, because it is always present. Maybe not in the form of motivation, but emotions never leave us unless we have fallen into an apathetic state. To clarify: motivation based on need works just like hunger and thirst do. Once such needs are satisfied we are not affected by them anymore. What about anxiety, instead? It might not diminish even after the stressful situation has passed and, as we have previously discussed, the “fight or flight” from the autonomic nervous system can be triggered

and force the anxious individual to become even more closed off, afraid that any further mistake would only make everything worse. MacIntyre cites Epstein's (1984) distinction between rational and experiential system. One is consciously activated and helps us reflect upon our predicaments and find a possible solution to them. The experiential system, on the other hand, is subtle: it operates subconsciously, in a pervasive manner that makes emotion even more influential. Lastly, he mentions Buck's postulation that emotion is a more "primitive, subcortical and visceral" system than cognition, which results both from the evolution of the cerebral cortex of the brain and from the individual's cultural and social background. Emotion, then, is the core of the motivational system.

To conclude this section we should not forget what Daniel Shanahan (1997) pointed out:

"it is quite clear that language has roots deep into the affective dimension of human experience, and the nature of that relationship is critical to our understanding of the process of language learning, especially with respect to the role of literature and culture and to the way they can contribute to what we might call 'affective magnet, that is, the power to turn affect into an inducement rather than an obstacle to learning.'" (p. 169)

### *1.1.2. Motivation*

In regard to motivation, Corder (1967: 164) states that if learners are motivated then they will inevitably learn L2, as long as she – or he – is exposed to the language itself. Cummins and Davison too (2007) insist that the acquisition of language – whether it is L2 or a FL – can happen only when motivation is present. For Crookes and Schmidt (1991: 498-502) it is about the interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in class; persistence with the learning task, which can be witnessed by observing the levels of attention or action during the task itself, as well as concentration and enjoyment in performing it. Dörnyei (2001b: 8), agreeing with Crookes and Schmidt, asserts that motivation is the one factor we cannot do without, in LL, since it is not simply the one responsible for undertaking the task but also the internal drive that sustains us through the long and tiresome years needed to master a FL.

There are also other approaches and definitions, though. Back in 1956, Nida describes motivation as something more than just the desire to learn a language. To him it is the interest in learning for a *purpose*, which he identifies mainly as the desire to communicate with foreigners (labeled as the 'out-group' in his paper). Another important component is the "sensitivity to the out-group". To illustrate this concept he provides us the example of a woman who had been living in Mexico for years and yet she never bothered to learn Spanish grammar properly. Such behavior was not due to either a lack of interest in the L2 or the Mexican culture. Nida notices, instead, that "sensitivity"

was directed to her “in-group” (fellow American citizens). In other words, she did not mind what Mexican people thought about the way she spoke but she was hurt by criticism if it was coming from Americans. Yet Ushioda (2006) argues that it is crucial to ascertain if participation in a shared community (one including both “in” and “out” group) is seen as an enrichment or as a threat. Furthermore Schumann (1978), in his acculturation model, demonstrated that if we cannot identify, even remotely, with the target culture; if we are afraid we are going to be assimilated (this fear relates more to L2 than to a FL, by the way) and consequently we try to psychologically distance ourselves from the language and its speakers, then we will never learn it. Moreover, Balboni (2008) does not agree on “purpose” being a powerful motivating force. As we have already mentioned, to him it is actually the weakest. Then there is obligation, which has been proven to become a strong motivator if it is born out of a sense of responsibility and a desire to do right by an esteemed teacher. Pleasure is the strongest. Lamb (2007), however, points out that this is true for Western educational system. Instrumental motivation, that is to say learning for a specific purpose (mainly to travel or for work) is much more prominent in Asia than in Europe, America, or Canada. For further details on the matter, Lamb refers to the studies by Lai (1999) and by Warden & Lin (2000) in particular.

As a final point, two other elements are worth discussing when dealing with motivation: expectancy and need for achievement. Expectancy, as described by McDonough (1986: 151), is quite similar to Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory, i.e. how likely might the performance of a task be successful (perceived as either easy or difficult based on previous experiences of success or failure). Need for achievement is actually an evolution of expectancy. Postulated by Atkinson (1957, cited in McDonough; *ibid.*) and opposed to avoidance of failure, it is composed of three factors:

- 1) the person’s expectation of success (or failure)
- 2) the value of the task
- 3) the orientation toward success or toward avoidance of failure.

Need for achievement studies, according to McDonough, have demonstrated that pattern drills have a stronger impact on students who choose to try avoiding failure instead of striving for success.

### 1.3. Anxiety

Anxiety is the psychological and somatic reaction individuals have when facing external stimuli appraised as threatening. Essential for survival since the earliest stages of humankind, it has evolved from warning us about physical threats to include also dangers for our own self-image, especially in social contexts. Some expressions of anxiety are undoubtedly somatic: tachycardia, sweating palms, excessive perspiration, variations in blood pressure, muscular tension, headaches, stomach ache. Others involve the behavioral scope (fight or flight reaction, for example) or the cognitive one (indecision). According to cognitive psychology, anxiety can be defined as the awareness that there are situations in life where one cannot be 100% in control of every little detail. Every one of us has a belief system through which we interpret the world (and by which it is influenced and modified); if something challenges it, endangering its structure, we will either try to adjust the system to this new element – or vice versa – or we will develop a form of uneasiness, of anxiety, whenever we will find ourselves in a similar predicament again. If every time one tries to speak English (as a FL) the teacher does not let them speak, in haste of correcting their mistake, and peers laugh at flaws in pronunciation and malapropisms, then one would be afraid of talking in class. As mentioned earlier (1.2.1), such strong apprehension can be related to a specific setting or occurrence and therefore not be present once the ‘threat’ is over. This is called *state anxiety*.

*Trait anxiety*, on the other hand, is more generalized and even though it may diminish during the day – for some people it is stronger in the morning and lessens in the evening (Neuman, 2012) – it keeps affecting individuals even when they are not asked to confront their fears (for further details see Spielberger et al.; 1983). Gardner and MacIntyre (1991b: 90; 1994: 284) see language anxiety as a situation specific kind of tension, taking place both in productive (writing, speaking), receptive (listening, reading) and learning contexts. According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991:29-30), who observed learners freeze in role play situations and witnessed that they knew the grammar of the L2 only to forget about it during tests, fear can have three main manifestations: 1) communicative apprehension (CA); 2) test anxiety; 3) fear of negative evaluation.

In terms of LL, anxiety can be related to Weiner’s (1986) attribution theory: by blaming an eventual failure on the lack of effort, which is a controllable variable, instead of luck or difficulty of the task (which go beyond one’s control) students might feel less anxious because they can take the matter into their own hands and do better next time. Of course, if one has no self-confidence and lacks dramatically in the self-efficacy department they would just think they are too stupid to accomplish such a complicated task. Clément (cited in MacIntyre, 2002: 69), indeed, ascertained the

underestimation students have of their level of proficiency that leads them to create a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. Dörnyei (2001b: 130) remarks the crucial role of teachers in increasing learners' self-confidence. Teachers are not psychologists, of course, but still they should be careful in putting a highly self-conscious anxious pupil at the center of attention and exposing him to possible humiliation. Madsen, Brown and Jones (1991: 84) in their two studies on students enrolled in German courses (both at beginner and intermediate level) at Brigham Young University, have seen that anxiety varies according to the type of test – or task - learners' have to deal with. Oral tests, in particular, seem (according to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope; 1991: 30) to have the potential to provoke both test and communicative anxiety at the same time in heavily apprehensive students. On the contrary, other learners (extroverts, high achievers) might feel at ease, even encouraged, by speaking in front of the whole class. People have a different reaction to the same stimuli, after all. Daly (1991: 10) called this variable, which relates to how students feel at performing in public, 'conspicuousness'.

Bailey (1983) insists on competitiveness as a source of anxiety: the comparing of one's results with those achieved by one's peer, or with oneself and one's own personal standards, and need for approval by the teachers by meeting their expectations.

In spite of having presented anxiety as a negative factor, in fact, a small amount is actually good because it shields us from harm and keeps us on edge. Eysenck (1982; cited in Boscolo; 1986: 27) demonstrated that great achievements can be reached under great pressure. This is called *facilitating anxiety* and it is what motivates a great deal of students to bear an intensive study session for a couple of weeks before the exams. *Debilitating anxiety*, instead, lowers the quality of learners' performance or prevents them from engaging in the activity in the first place (Kleinmann; 1977, adapted for ESL from Alpert and Haber; 1960) .

Mistakenly, teachers believe that there is no such thing as *writing apprehension*. Until Hilleson (1996) and his qualitative study, scholars too tended to associate foreign language anxiety – FLA – exclusively with speaking and listening but Hilleson demonstrates how it can be connected to writing and reading too. Writing, indeed, can be as stressful as speaking, even though it lacks the same immediacy. Besides, while talking one might still manage to be understood and mistakes do not carry the same weight they would have in a written text. Style, a proper and rich lexis, grammatical accuracy are all elements a *writer* has to worry about. Both speaking and writing, though, can cause the same feeling of frustration at not being able to express thoughts, feeling and beliefs as eloquently as we would in our mother tongue. What one manages to show to the others, then, is only a small part of who that person really is. Fearing that they may never reach the level of

competence they look for, in terms of spoken and written comprehension – as well as oral and written production - so they drop the language course and give up. Or, if they are still in high school, they stop caring about bad grades and resign themselves to failure. Anxiety, therefore, influences motivation as observed by Gardner and MacIntyre (cited in MacIntyre 2002: 64). Another fundamental factor is the previous history with foreign and/or second language learning, especially if we are dealing with teenagers or adults that might have already studied a language in their life. Experiences of success or failure and the way teachers justified the feedback (or the grades) they gave to students, heavily influence the level of anxiety one might feel toward LL. Gardner (1985) claims that older students are slightly more anxious than younger ones, but that has to be expected since they have a clearer and less flexible ideal of themselves.

Daly (1991: 5-6) recalls five explanations for the development of communicative apprehension:

- 1) genetic predisposition (which has not been given much credit, because if a student was born as ‘not predisposed’ there would not be much teachers could do to help him);
- 2) history of negative feedbacks and unjustified punishments;
- 3) learners’ helplessness at an unexplained, puzzling, negative feedback or punishment;
- 4) lack of possibility to approach the FL in their childhood or early adolescence (the time frame that has been proven to be the most congenial to LL);
- 5) lack of appropriate models of communicating (that is to say that not even the teachers they had were actually fluent in the FL, therefore they did not set a good example for pupils). Among the sources of such anxiety, moreover, he lists (ibid: 9-10):
  - a) *fear of evaluation*;
  - b) *novelty*: unfamiliarity with the materials and/or with the task required;
  - c) *ambiguity*: when people do not know what they are judged on or what is going to happen during the task, for example test and exams that are little related to what has been done in class (Crookhall, Oxford; 1991: 143);
  - c) *conspicuousness* and
  - d) *priory history of language learning*.

Daly also mentions the evident bias a teacher, in the Western educational system, has towards talkative people. Shy, introvert and reticent learners might feel judged negatively even before they speak, and such an attitude from teachers does not encourage them to take risks by interacting. Skehan (1989: 106) argues that taking risks is associated with a greater success in LL. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991b: 110), on the other hand, point out how the repeated failures in one’s attempt to



learn L2 (or a FL) take their toll on motivation and increase the chances of feeling anxious while learning the language. Moreover, they present (in Horwitz 1991: 43) Tobias' model (1986) about the effects of anxiety on learning, which is divided in three stages: input, processing and output. Apprehension in the input stage, where one receives new information and starts representing it mentally in order to memorize it, will reflect on the subsequent stages too. The processing stage, in fact, deals with the organization and storage of said input. Here anxiety lengthens the processing time, meaning that it will take longer for students to perform the tasks required (especially if the tasks are difficult, poorly organized and/or rely heavily on memory), and hinders the retrieval of what has been learned. The output stage, involving the production of the assimilated input, is heavily reliant on the time it will take the students to retrieve the acquired information and how they will choose to organize it when speaking or writing. More recently, MacIntyre (2002: 66) summarized the research on the effect of language anxiety in four areas: academic, where it frequently leads to 'overstudying' and the effort will not be repaid with a good grade; cognitive (debilitating vs. facilitating anxiety); social (the fear of having to talk to mothertongue speakers); personal (since it undermines one's perception of oneself).

Dörnyei (2001b: 126-127) stresses the importance of helping learners to create realistic beliefs about LL. He refers to Horwitz's (1988) BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) to point out that learners should be made aware of their own misconceptions about language learning - "do not talk/write in a FL until you will be sure of making no mistakes", "you have to understand every single word in order to read a text in a FL", "there is only one way, one strategy, to learn a FL and if it does not suits you just give up" etc. - and helped to get rid of them so that it will be easier to succeed in mastering the L2/FL. Concerning this matter, Mariani (2010) recalls a survey done in 2001, for the European Year of Languages, where 22% of the interviewees do not learn FL because they believe they will not be any good at it. "I have no aptitude for languages", they say to themselves to justify their gradual demotivation and inability to see themselves succeeding. Aptitude, indeed, is seen as something indispensable but genetically inherited and not just as a propensity to learn the language quicker than those who lack it.

Academics and researchers do not simply try to define anxiety, but attempt to find ways that can diminish it. Disick (1972: 418), for example, has several suggestions: group work, compositions graded only with "pass" or "fail" and in relation to comprehensibility (of the compositions) rather than the number of mistakes made in the compositions themselves. A composition, he states, can also be graded with "pass" if the errors pointed out by the teacher on drafts are corrected in the paper the students actually hand in. According to him, it is also important to establish goals for each

unit of study and clarify the manner in which students are going to be tested to see if they reached them. Anxiety levels, then, are lowered and study becomes more effective since it is directed toward a specific performance.

Mejias, Applbaum, Applbaum and Trotter (1991: 97) believe that communicative anxiety might be lowered by: systematic desensitization (SD), cognitive modification (CM) and skills training (ST). SD is about training the students to relax after they come across stressful stimuli, CM deals with wrongful self-evaluation and shows learners how to develop more facilitating self-talk and in ST they are taught the behavioral skills required for success in a particular oral communication context. Koch and Terrell (ibid: 109), instead, propose the Natural Approach, for its acceptance of a “silent” phase from the students and for its emphasis on acquiring skill in stages.

Notwithstanding the numerous theories that have been mentioned here, some scholars like Sparks and Ganschow (1991) question the very existence of foreign language anxiety and relegate it to a mere side effect of difficulty and poor achievement in LL.

## **1.2. Learning in informal environments**

Traditionally, many people are led to believe that whatever kind of learning does not take place at school is not worth mentioning, not as prestigious as the one obtained academically.

However, we have to acknowledge that it cannot be limited to one setting since all lived experiences are a source of learning. Merriam, Baumgartner & Caffarella (2007: 35) point out that more than 90% of adults are engaged in hundreds of hours of informal learning and that 70% of learning in the workplace is informal.

Regarding teenagers, Abruzzese points out that:

*“la formazione non può essere interpretata in modi distinti né dalla produzione di fiction, giochi, divertimento né dalla produzione di informazione, perché tutti questi ambiti, queste zone, appartengono a un'unica grande costellazione di pratiche significanti e simboliche, grazie alle quali il soggetto ha modo appunto di 'formare se stesso'.”(1993; cited in Mazzotta, 1999: 10)*

Such kinds of learning are usually voluntary and seldom motivated by a need for achievement, so it is not surprising that as Clément et. al (1977) report, those who learn English in school experience more English-use anxiety than do those who learn it at home or with friends, suggesting that more formal learning situations seem to lead to greater anxiety levels.

McGroarty (2001: 81), indeed, claims that informal learning has a “broader agenda” that sees personal and group development tied to the interaction with a wide variety of people, not only age peers but younger children and adults as well, and mindful to individual differences attesting the

fact that the route that LL takes in such context differs from individual to individual. Chick and Breidbach (2011: 146, 154) agree on that, stating that learning a second or foreign language does not follow a straightforward path and that students also seek alternative ones to improve their proficiency, i.e. via English language popular culture or through the Internet. If the learners are willing to join online communities, in fact, they have access to different LL opportunities. The two researchers observed a strong emotional involvement learners displayed in discussing their out-of-class English use. Using said popular culture actively then, discussing it in the FL with mothertongue speakers – or writing narratives about it that are meant to be read by a L1, ESL, and EFL public as will be discussed in Chapter 2 – can be their way of supplementing traditional teaching and learning. An approach to language education that is not so much structured on the language itself but on the use of the language is very much appreciated by learners, as attested by Syed's (2001: 138) study. Still, as pointed out by Celentin (2004: 184), e-learning uses almost exclusively the writing medium. This can be seen as a flaw, because it is not likely to improve one's speaking and listening skills, but she actually underlines its virtues like the fact that it allows one to go back and edit a text as many times as one needs to and, if used for academic purposes, requires a thorough and selective study of the sources by the learners and it allows the synchronic analysis of contributions coming from the same class or a diachronic analysis of contributions coming from the same student.

Schugurensky (2000), in his paper, presents three forms of informal learning:

1) self-directed, which is intentional and conscious. It is self-directed learning if one decides he/she wants to know more about a specific culture and go to the library, speak with people belonging to said culture and attends lectures about the topic.

2) incidental is unintentional but conscious, because it is recognized as learning later on. It is probably the most frequent way people take lessons from life.

3) tacit (or socialization), which is both unintentional and unconscious.

He believes the latter is responsible for the stereotypes and prejudices that one has. They come from the socio-cultural background and one does not realize how much of an impact it has on one, although Schugurensky mentions the possibility of “retrospective recognition” that can be either internal – if one becomes aware of flawed judgment by being exposed to a different social environment, for example – or external, when people realize they have learnt something by talking with someone else who asks them about it.

Self-learning is part of the *lifelong learning*, which has been defined by the European Commission – as quoted by Serragiotto (2004: 106) – as “all purposeful learning activities, whether formal or

informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.”

To conclude it should be pointed out that LL learning in informal environments, according to Sade (2011: 55), creates conditions for learners to experience the complexity and ambiguity of learning in the real world.

### **1.3. Andragogy and autonomy**

Despite being the longest phase of one's life, adulthood is not easy to be defined universally in terms of age. There might have been a time when it corresponded to being seventeen years old and over (U.S. Department of Education, 1986; cited in Merriam et. al, 2007: 56), but not anymore. Several researchers define it in terms of physical, psychological and professional development; others consider the legal and social aspects too. It is a concept that is constantly changing, bound to temporal and geographical constraints, according to the needs of each specific society and its definition of 'maturity'. Arnett (2000) proposes the concept of “emerging adulthood”, which refers to the ages between eighteen and twenty-five. Most of the people interviewed in our research, as we will see, belongs to this group.

The interest towards learning in adulthood has brought forward theories such as the *life-span theory* that later evolved into the aforementioned concept of *lifelong learning*. This approach to LL focuses on acquisition processes and cognitive styles rather than teaching techniques. Since 2002, as highlighted by Begotti (2007: 4), it has been expanded into *lifewide learning*: a kind of education that comprehends life as a whole in terms of opportunities to learn, regardless of them being on “an ongoing basis” or not.

LL setting can be either formal, non-formal or informal. Formal learning takes place in recognized institutions and leads to the achievement of a degree (or a certification) attesting the level of proficiency attained; non-formal learning can be set in cultural association or in the workplace and informal – as previously discussed – occurs in daily life.

As stated by Serragiotto (2004: 114), a teacher has several different roles in this formal and non-formal contexts: facilitator, organizer and entertainer, linguistic consultant, experimenter and artist. As facilitator, Caon (2010: 27) suggests, a teacher should negotiate between curriculum directives and interest/needs of the students, giving them the instruments to be autonomous, and be mindful of cognitive and learning styles. As organizer and entertainer, he or she should organize and manage various didactic activities, leading learners down the path that is most congenial for their learning.

Moreover, they should entertain the class and liven up the activities with their suggestions and advice. As linguistic consultants, they offer – when needed – their expertise to students and as experimenters and artists, they experiment new methodologies and techniques, using their knowledge to create new materials best suited to the learners' needs.

Adult learners are people who, more often than not, already have considerable knowledge of the world and reminiscences from previous learning experiences. Knowles (1973) thinks there are six characteristics that equate adult learners:

- 1) *self-concept*; they have a very clear idea of who they are and what they want, therefore he desires to have a say in the methodology of his language learning and discuss it with the teacher, in order to have more autonomy.
- 2) motivation; they tend to have an immediate need to learn the language because their work requires it or they would like to get a promotion, but there are also people who learn a language to acquire a new skill and thereby improve their self-confidence.
- 3) need for knowledge; since they are going to devote their time and efforts they demand to know the purpose of learning tasks and LL itself.
- 4) they have a limited *readiness to learn*, meaning that they are willing to learn only what they see as necessary to satisfy their needs.
- 5) their *orientation to learning* is goal orientated; they are interested in solving problems in everyday life rather than having an in depth knowledge about language
- 6) they are shaped by their previous *experience(s)* in LL.

Mazzotta (cited in Begotti; 2007: 6) points out that adult LL can be influenced by three variables: individual, social and natural. Individual variables are the specific of each person, their distinguishing characteristics (motivation, introversion or extroversion, approach to risk taking, cognitive style, propensity to anxiety and so on), social ones are determined by the environment and the cultural context surrounding the learners (learning style, for example) and natural concern innate aspects such as aptitude and age.

In spite of the mostly voluntary nature of adult learning, opposition to it can occur – in a formal or non-formal environment - due to different approaches to LL. Currently, most Italian adults are familiar with the grammar-translation method and might feel the communicative one as a waste of time. Also foreign people, used to different learning styles, might feel the same. It would be wise, then, to discuss their goals and reach a learning agreement.

Adults like to be autonomous, so that they can manage to combine LL with their daily routine. Motivation, besides, is at its highest when people have sufficient autonomy as to organize

their learning in the way they prefer.

One of the most relevant theories pertaining to autonomy is self-determination theory. According to Deci & Ryan (1985), individuals have the same psychological needs and they will be inclined to engage in activities which will satisfy them. Said needs are autonomy, competence (knowing that you can live up to the challenges, that you will overcome difficulties), and relatedness (feeling you are connected to others and esteemed by them, the sense of belonging to a larger community). Noels (2005: 58) insists that they must be nurtured by contextual supports, in order to ensure language acquisition. That is to say, for example, that to enhance autonomy the learner has to receive autonomy-supportive feedback from significant others around him. Teachers, in particular, should provide him choices about learning, allow him to solve problems independently, and avoid asserting authority and control over him. Dörnyei (2001b: 125) suggests that increasing the learners' goal-orientedness can be a manner to foster autonomy too. Once a sense of direction is established, through 'itineraries' designed for each student, and learners have set their personal criteria for success through a learning agreement, they will see the purpose of their learning both as individuals and as a group.

Noels (2009: 302) also points out that, as conceptualized in self-determination theory, autonomy does not focus on the technical skills that students must develop to pursue a learning activity outside the classroom: "Autonomy... concerns the difference between behavioral engagement that is congruent with one's values, interests and need (i.e., with one's self) versus alienated, passively or reactively defiant." (Ryan & Deci, 2004: 450)

Paiva (2011: 63) sees autonomy as a process that undergoes periods of instability, variability and adaptability. Autonomous learners, therefore, reflect about their learning and use effective learning strategies.

Distance language learning (e-learning), which has been mentioned in the previous section, requires a high degree of autonomy. Learners in such programs, as pointed out by Murphy (2011: 107), are generally responsible for scheduling their study time and are expected to set personal goals. Even autonomous learners, though, experience setbacks or changing circumstances concerning their motivation.

Ushioda (2001: 122), indeed, underlines the link between autonomy and motivation. "Effective motivational thinking", she states, "implies managing an affective dimension in order to optimize and sustain one's involvement in learning."

Autonomy, according to Dörnyei (2001b: 131) is beneficial to learning. The scholar believes that this assumption can be linked the principles of humanistic psychology, in particular the one that

states that “the only kind of learning which significantly affects behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning.” (Rogers, 1961: 276)

## CHAPTER 2 - READING AND WRITING IN EFL: THE FAN FIC PHENOMENON

### 2.1. Reading in a foreign language

Williams (1984: 2) defines reading as a process whereby one looks at and understands what is written in a text. This does not imply that every word has to be understood, but that learners can get to what the text is about and draw information from it, if needed. Williams also points out that the main difference between the native speaker and the foreign learner is that the former uses knowledge of the language to help him read, whereas the latter uses reading to help him learn the language. A fundamental skill then, that both the native speaker and the foreign learner need to master, is inference.

Reading, as Goodman (1970) said, is a psychological guessing game between the mind and the language, during which the reader is constantly occupied in a selective, tentative anticipatory process. In other words, even when the reader is not able to fully understand the meaning of a couple of terms in the text, he can guess their meaning by observing the context instead of looking them up in a dictionary. The context is interpreted through his knowledge of the world that leads him to form hypothesis, which will be confirmed or confuted as he carries on reading.

'Integration', to use Morris' (1972: 258) terminology, is needed. After all, literal understanding – which is often all that is required by the curriculum – does not correspond to total comprehension. Following literal comprehension, Morris claims there must be critical insight and emotional involvement. This latter stand for the relationship that, little by little, is established between characters and readers who start participating emotionally in their joys and misfortunes. 'Critical', instead, suggest a thorough analysis of the text, forming opinions about it. 'Insight' implies interacting with it at a deeper level, taking guesses by *integrating* each new idea with both the knowledge he already possesses and the one he can draw from the text itself.

In the classroom, though, Grellet (1990: 18) argues that this natural order is subverted. Students are asked to deal with passages they are not really interested in, knowing nothing about a topic that they cannot relate to a more general and cultural context. In such circumstances it is not easy for students to learn to read better. Therefore, they should be encouraged to voice out to the teachers the topics that they would like to read about.

What is the purpose of reading, though? Rivers (1981: 260) addresses the fact that not every learner will have the opportunity to speak with a native speaker but they might read books, magazines or scientific journals written in the FL. Furthermore, Horst (2005: 356) claims that



written texts are richer in lexis than spoken discourses and, therefore, they offer the opportunity for fluent readers to encounter items that they would unlikely meet by watching the television or listening to the radio, for example. It should not be overlooked, by the way, that the reading skill is the one that can most easily be trained and improved autonomously.

Williams (1984: 20) believes that, once the reading skill is mastered, students are able to identify the purpose of the text or its function, to adjust their way of reading according to its purpose (choosing among intensive reading, skimming or scanning), to learn language and content from reading and to be able to read with some degree of critical awareness. Moreover, Grellet (1990: 8) recommends not to separate this skill from the others and hence to include in the exercises: summarizing (reading and writing); comparing an article and a news-bulletin (reading and listening), discussions and debates on something that has been read (reading and speaking).

Aside from learning the language, though, there are other ends that can be achieved through reading. Yorio (1985: 158) lists five ideal aims for reading activities:

- a) obtain knowledge;
- b) understand instructions;
- c) understand correspondence;
- d) keep in touch with the world;
- e) obtain useful information about our immediate world (schedules, menus, programs);
- f) seek enjoyment.

Within the educational system, however, one undoubtedly needs to learn how to study and therefore to organize and remember what one had read – as pointed out by Rigo (2005: 95). According to Grellet (1990) learners should also understand the communicative value of a text, learn how the information is delivered and organized through the use of paragraphs – which might be their first look at academic writing – and to discriminate between facts and opinions.

Still, Yorio observes that students seem to read for totally different purposes: to learn how to read, to learn the FL and to please the teacher who asks them too. To suggest different goals for reading, then, Cardona (2004: 114) underlines the importance of the pre-reading stage. Discussing with the teacher what they are about to do might help them to see the point of going through that particular passage, increasing their motivation and activating both cognitive and metacognitive processes.

Exercises, besides, must be meaningful. In real life people do not reply to questions about what they have just read but rather they might have to write an answer to a letter, follow written directions or solve a problem. The teacher, then, should design the activities accordingly.

Rivers (1981: 281) suggests giving tasks that request seeking out information from a text, in a

collaborative or competitive atmosphere, so that rapid reading will be encouraged.

As already mentioned, there are different ways of reading. Intensive reading, which means reading carefully every word (IR), scanning (looking for a specific information in the text), skimming (going quickly through the text to get the gist of it), and extensive reading (ER; done for the pleasure of the activity itself). Bernhardt (1991), moreover, talks about reading as: public (when it happens during a lecture, or broadcasting the news), shared (when one is reading the same text together with a classmate, for example) or private activity. The last two are the most frequent and, consequently, should be practiced in class. Bernhardt notices that, however, school seems to have failed in making the students habitual readers and to teach them to enjoy literature. Private reading, also known as ER, becomes a loathsome task when it is forced up them. On the other hand, ER must be graded somehow – maybe keeping records of it, as advised by Rivers (1981: 285) – otherwise students will feel as if they are not getting credit for their effort. Positive feedback is not enough, if teachers want ER to be regarded as a high priority activity.

According to Day and Bamford (cited in Horst; 2005: 357), the main goal of ER is to develop reading fluency. In other words, as Cardona (2004: 95) explains, the process of connecting the terms to their mental representation becomes faster and we have – as an additional benefit – the acquisition of new FL vocabulary. Taylor (1990), however, does not see vocabulary acquisition as something that happens by chance. In his view, reading helps learners access different levels of knowledge of the unknown word:

- 1) how frequently it occurs;
- 2) whether it is formal or informal;
- 3) how it has to be collocated within the sentences;
- 4) whether and how its root are related to other parts of the discourse;
- 5) what its definition (or definitions, if it's a polysemic word) is
- 6) what its equivalent in L1 is (if there is one)

Taylor, in fact, does not see translation from FL/L2 to L1 as a negative procedure, as long as it is not done word by word. Cardona (2004: 100) agrees, stating that many words are learned through their presence in the texts, thanks to the frequency of exposure and inferential processes. The first of said processes is selective coding, that allows to know – as regards the unknown lexis – what parts of the context might be useful and what do not help at all. Then we have selective combining, which looks for and underlines links between various pieces of information regarding the unknown word. Lastly, there is selective comparing that puts in relation the new word that has been learned with information present in the long term memory.

Nevertheless, exposure to unknown lexis alone cannot guarantee vocabulary acquisition. Students need to be aware of the processes discussed above, so that they can make use of both their linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge. Taylor (1990: 38-40), besides, presents several obstacles to teaching vocabulary:

- a) encouraging generalization;
- b) choosing an inappropriate stimulus (pictures that are supposed to help may mislead the reader);
- c) a less than explicit explanation of the meaning;
- d) helping by asking questions not involving an information gap, thus making the adults feel patronized;
- e) asking learners to concentrate on both the semantic meaning and the form of the items they are supposed to learn at the same time.

An obstacle that can challenge the ability to anticipate the content of the text (also called *expectancy grammar*), instead, is the fact that what is printed is a product of the culture it belongs to. As noticed by Bernhardt (1991: 14-15), learners often lack the sociocultural skills to perceive the values carried by different newspapers (in Italy, you will find a very different version of the same event, depending if you are reading “Il Fatto” or “Il giornale”) and fail to understand the cultural references too. References that are not meant to be obscure, but might be difficult to get for someone who does not belong to the same community as the writer. A FL reader, in order to understand, needs to gain access – somehow – to the same implicit information.

All too often, students are asked to read at a level they are not at ease with, especially at the intermediate stage where oversimplified texts are too easy and authentic materials are too hard. Rivers (1981: 280) believes they should engage in text carefully selected for their readability at the stage they have reached, so that they will see that reading can be a pleasant and rewarding activity. Concerning readability, Rigo (2005: 41) proposes four features teachers should look for:

- 1) simple syntactical structure that prefers short sentences and a small number of subordinate clauses;
- 2) a proper paragraph subdivision and the use of subheadings;
- 3) use of graphics, maps and pictures;
- 3) typographical use of characters (italics, bold, underlining) to point out important information or data.

This is another proof that school has yet to so succeed in encouraging pupils to read at home, to see reading as a pleasurable activity to which they should devote some of their spare time, and they are unlikely to change idea and do it on their own will in later life. ER, thus, is crucial and if it involves

contemporary material of varied origins it might even help them to understand and be understood better by native speakers. Advanced learners, the ones we will be dealing with in our research, should be given the same kind of stuff they would appreciate in L1.

### *2.1.1. Affective factors in reading*

Motivation, according to Grellet (1990: 18) is crucial to reading. Being motivated, he states, means that one approaches the texts already expecting to find the information one needs, the answer to one's questions, or ideas one might be interested in. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) agrees on this assumption, but he advises against having merely an extrinsic – utilitarian – motivation. Indeed, one in life does not need to reach the levels of literacy required by educational standards. Teachers, then, should focus on intrinsic rewards of reading too. After all, Inghilleri (1986) has observed that reading is one of the most widespread activities people do just for fun. Especially those who, for life circumstances (financial, personal, psychological), live quite secluded, therefore they do not travel and do not participate in cultural or social events. Reading can be a way to escape reality and to enter a whole new world. Literature, moreover, is frequently a source of inspiration for the cinematographic industry. From the movies that are loosely based on a book, to those that try to be as faithful to the source text as possible. Learners might feel more motivated and more involved in reading, if they are asked to compare the movie to the book.

In school, they do need a goal. So that, once such goal is reached, they get meaningful feedback from the teacher and that will keep them involved in the reading tasks.

Furthermore, Brandt (1994) believes that the more positive motivational attitude to reading as opposed to writing, is due to the fact that reading has always been experienced as a ritual, something done with your parents because it was considered as normal part of responsible care of young children. She also points out that it is easier for one to identify himself as a reader (“avid reader”, “quite a reader”) than as a writer.

Even though reading is believed to be the language skill least susceptible to anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) observed that reading performance does get impaired by anxiety, despite its nature of a private activity that provides unlimited possibilities for reflection and reconsideration. Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) suppose there are two elements of reading that might make students feel uneasy: a) unfamiliar scripts and writing systems; b) unfamiliar cultural material. Concerning EFL, then, learners feel frustrated when they understand the literal meaning of sentences but they are unable to decode a comprehensible, logical, meaning out of them. Their sociocultural ignorance becomes blatant and this is when anxiety kicks in.

In addition, there is the false – but quite common – belief that one has to understand every word that is written on the page or otherwise information will be lost. Research by Saito, Horwitz and Gazza shows that 63% of the pupils get nervous and confused when they do not understand 100% of the text. This study also shows, as it can be expected, that people with higher levels of FLA tend to have a higher level of FL reading anxiety and vice versa.

To partly overcome such specific anxiety, or at least managing to be productive in spite of it, Vandenberg (1993) proposes to work in small groups. By asking slow readers to work together, they will not feel the pressure of having to follow the pace set by faster classmates. On the other hand, quick readers too will benefit from cooperating and avoid the risk of growing bored because they have to wait until the slower classmates are finished with the task assigned. Relating reading anxiety to the study of literature – that, at the high-intermediate and advanced levels, tends to use a more complex language than the one learners have studied – the scholar recommends to take a three stage approach. The first stage is composed of pre-reading activities (focused discussion, brainstorming) that can help to ease the students into the stylistic, narrative or cultural difficulties they will encounter in the text as well as making them aware of the knowledge about the topic that they already possess. Then we have comprehension activities, based on the text they have read. Only then, once the teacher is sure that the text has been understood, the class will move forward to analysis activities.

## **2.2. Writing in a foreign language**

Writing is indisputably significant in language education. As stated by Bjork (2003: 21), it promotes language development and critical thinking. What is more, it actually visualizes thinking thereby making it an essential tool in any subject, a tool that makes it easier to reflect upon a topic and revising it. Rigo (2005: 193) concurs, stating that writing is essential because it helps the students become accustomed to plan a text, making sure of its internal and external coherency as well as its cohesion. Moreover, writing makes students aware of communicative rules and communication as a system.

It is, therefore, a key component of the communicative competence. It shows that one does not merely know the vocabulary of a language but is able to use it according to one's purpose and choosing the proper register needed by the social setting of the situation. Besides, it might be easier for those students suffering from communication apprehension to express themselves through writing since they will not be judged by peers and have more time to correct their mistakes.

It might be one of the reasons why language education has focused so much on the writing

skill, as hypothesized in “Le dieci tesi per l’educazione linguistica democratica (GISCEL)” paper of 1975. As mentioned, though, the tolerance for mistakes in writing is actually lower than in speaking, and that can be anxiety arousing. However, writing tasks do involve more easily introverted pupils who otherwise would not participate in activities such as dialogues, role-plays or dramatizations. Through writing, then – mindful of Confucius’ quote “Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.” – formal language proficiency can be promoted, as well as the ability to distinguish different kinds of texts and their purposes. These are skills learned through reading and consolidated thanks to writing.

Lately, due to the new technologies that have been developed, it is far less difficult to concentrate on the process rather than the product. Teachers start by guiding the students step by step, from the conceptualization to the exposition, helping them to avoid the frustrating occurrence of going ‘off topic’. The goal, of course, is to make them autonomous but it cannot be expected that students learn how to organize their ideas simply by reading, particularly if asked to express their own opinion on a specific topic.

Several approaches have been taken, throughout the history of language education, to this specific skill. Raimes (1983: 6-19) registers:

- 1) the *controlled to free* approach; from a highly controlled activity to free writing
- 2) the *free writing* approach; used on intermediate and advanced students
- 3) the *paragraph-pattern* approach; where instead of accuracy of grammar and fluency of content the focus is on organization of the discourse
- 4) the *grammar-syntax-organization* approach, which – instead – devises writing tasks that lead students to pay attention to organization while they also work on the necessary grammar and syntax
- 5) the *communicative* approach, which stresses the purpose of a piece of writing and the audience it is aimed to
- 6) the *process* approach; where the teachers design pre-writing activities such as reading, debating, brainstorming.

A teacher does not need to choose the approach he believes to be the fittest to his necessities, but rather to use all of them in order to provide variety in FLL.

Notwithstanding its importance, the GISCEL’s paper of 1975 mentioned before, states that writing skill is promoted through activities that are not correlated to actual needs. Many do not come across ‘academic writing’ until university, when they are expected to already know how to write an essay. Others cannot get rid of the influence of L1. Italian native speakers might tend to go for long sentences, to use many subordinate clauses, and try hard to avoid repetition even when

writing in English. Those who are actually able to discuss a topic at great length might not know how to take notes, schematize and be concise. Unless they have been sufficiently instructed about the specific requirements of a scientific article, academic essay or any other kind of writing that is not narrative they will have a hard time, even in their mothertongue, choosing the proper style/register/terminology or discourse structure when dealing with real recipients. It does not mean that narrative writing should be cast aside, because I personally believe that it is the most pleasurable kind of writing and therefore it serves a motivating purpose. However, students have to engage in argumentative and expository writing too.

More recently, another paper from GISCEL (*Idee per un curricolo di educazione linguistica democratica oltre i provvedimenti del ministro Moratti*; 2004) reiterates the writing proficiency demanded at the end of compulsory schooling:

- after primary school, they are supposed to be aware and keep in mind the different purposes of a text and to choose the register according to the addressee (in L1)

- at the end of middle school, they are presumed to be able to plan their writing beforehand and to be mindful of coherence and cohesion within the paragraphs, as well as using the appropriate lexis (in L1)

During high school, then, the above mentioned textual competence has to be consolidated, so that it can be transferred to the FL. Of course this does not mean that FL writing should be delayed until high school, but that students are made aware of what they have learned in L1 so that it could be all transferred to the FL successfully.

Different opinions on the best way to develop this productive skill are reported in the *Platform of resources and references for a plurilingual and intercultural education*<sup>2</sup>. Some claim that it can develop naturally, just asking the students to read as much as they can and to reflect on what they have read. Others defy this assumption, arguing that an intuitive approach favors just those who have an implicit knowledge of different text types and textual genres.

It is fundamental, according to the authors of the aforementioned paper, to find the right balance between going for explicit systematic approaches and those that give the students the opportunity to voice their ideas through writing, maybe identifying or arguing against their peers' opinions.

Besides, it should not be forgotten that as of today writing in language education has to take into account the new media and channels (blogs, wikis, chat rooms, social networks) through which

---

<sup>2</sup> The paper was edited by Laila Aase, Mike Fleming, Sigmund Ongstad, Irene Pieper and Florentina Samihaian for the Language Policy Division (European Council)

students communicate with the rest of the – mainly Anglophone or using EFL – world.

At a European level, despite the shared aims stated in CEFR's guidelines, there is a difference concerning the focus on certain aspects of writing, rather than others. There are countries where communicative genres are ones that get most of the attention – students are trained to write articles, stories, essays – while in others the focus is on text types, on being able to compose argumentative texts or expository, descriptive, narrative and normative ones. According to my experience --- as well as the one of the people I interviewed – narrative and expository compositions tend to be the most frequent ones in Italy, but elsewhere teachers require argumentative essays. In a multicultural classroom environment, moreover, we have to be aware of intercultural differences concerning writing. (for further details see Balboni, 2007; Zinsser, 2010)

### *2.2.1. The writing skill*

The nature of writing, as discussed by Sharples (1999: 5), can be quite paradoxical. It is a demanding activity, due to the fact that a writer has to use structures that do not belong to the spoken language (e.g. use of the passive voice, which is very limited in speech but required when writing in a formal register) and that incomplete or ungrammatical utterances cannot go unnoticed as they would in oral communication. It requires careful planning, but it needs space for creativity and improvisation. It works under constraints of grammar, style and topic and nevertheless being 'creative' means to break free of said constraints. It is a solitary task but, still, writers are not alone in the world so they are going to be influenced by their surrounding environment and culture. Moreover, we mostly write to communicate with other people. Thereby, it can be assumed that writing is primarily a social activity. Collaborative too, even though co-authorship has for long been tolerated only in scientific writing. Currently, however, it is far more common: just think about projects designed to gain research funds from the EU, which have to be written by at least three people coming from different countries.

According to Hedge (1989: 9), the “abilities” that a good writer is expected to possess are:

- 1) use the grammar properly;
- 2) have a wide vocabulary;
- 3) meaningful use of punctuation;
- 4) knowledge of layout conventions (that a scientific essay in English requires an abstract, for example);
- 5) accurate spelling;
- 6) be able to structure sentences in several ways but 7) link ideas and information across them in



order to develop a topic and 8) organize it clearly and convincingly.

Writers, then, go through different stages that lead to the production of written works. First of all, they start collecting ideas to form an overall plan in their heads. Then, they think about what they want to say and who they are writing for. Only then should the first draft be written.

Writing, however, would not be possible without the use of long-term memory in which individuals store their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, genre, topic, audience and so on. Still, it seems that when a writer does take notice of the audience he tends to consider them in a limited and one-dimensional way (Hayes, 1996: 24-26).

Mastery of the writing skill in L1 is important too. Edelsky's study (1982; cited in Friedlander, 1990: 109) indicates, indeed, that writing knowledge can be transferred across languages. What one has learned in order to write in his L1 and in other FLs, can be useful in mastering the writing skill in a recently acquired FL. A crucial factor to determine the actual proficiency in said skill is fluency. Bruton and Kirby (1987; cited in Latif, 2009: 533) distinguish two kinds of written fluency: one focused on text quantity and the other on the quality, that is to say the richness in content (vocabulary and style). Hester (2001; cited in *ibid*) includes also the organization of ideas and the knowledge of writing conventions in the target language.

In real life, however, we do not perform only this kind of 'extensive' writing. Since people do not talk at dictation speed, one has to learn how to pick out the important information and take notes. This means that writing is not a skill that should be learned in isolation, but integrated with the others, especially listening and reading. Krashen (1984; cited in Jacobs, 1986: 284), indeed, believes that one learns how to write by reading a lot and not by actual writing practice.

In addition, not everyone actually knows in advance what they are going to say. Sharples (1999: 112) differentiates two types of writers: those who discover what want to say while writing (discoverers) and those who write down what they have already in mind (planners). A skilled writer, however, is able to adapt his composing process and be either a 'discoverer' or a 'planner' depending on what is required by the task.

What are the main purpose of writing? We can write to narrate an event (chronicles), to document a fact (journals) or to express our own emotions (short stories or novels). Narratives, which have a prominent focus on the temporal factor, are only one of the text types that can be used while writing. If one desires to enrich one's readers knowledge about a subject, one is going to choose expository writing. If one wants to express one's opinion about a specific topic, then one will go for argumentative writing. These text types require quite a lot of effort on both the writer and on the reader's part: the first needs to collect information about the subject he will be dealing

with and choose the most relevant pieces he finds, the second has to understand how the discourse develops to follow the writer's logic. In specific genres, as noted by Rigo (2005: 40), such as reports, the organization and presentation of information follow fixed schemes that result from attentive planning. What has to be kept in mind, points out Sharples (1999: 91), is that composing is not to write words but to design a text. Bereiter (1980; cited in Boscolo, 1986: 157-158) identifies three levels of writing as a process:

- a) associative (instinctive, devoid of organization);
- b) communicative (sensitive to the addressee and to planning);
- c) epistemic (careful of the content, the concepts expressed, and inquisitive about how the text is going to be received).

As highlighted by Hayes (1996: 26), it is fundamental that writers understand – especially in a scholastic setting – that even very talented individuals require a long period of practice before they can produce notable work of art.

### 2.2.2. *Writing in the classroom*

Writing practice starts from guided exercises, leading to its highest forms that are essay and compositions. In 1983, Tomlinson described many of the writing textbooks as featuring *controlled writing* (filling blanks, completing sentences, rearranging jumbled words), *guided writing* (rearranging words and adding some of their own, completing sentences and then adding connectives to them) and *free writing*.

Teaching composition is a redundant, recursive path where different kinds of writing are practiced and revised constantly in order to reach a polished form with nuanced vocabulary and certain refinements of structure. Nevertheless, Rivers (1981: 297) claims that teachers better not expect all their pupils to reach a high standard in composition, unless they want to drive them into a state of frustration.

Focus on fluency, then, should be limited when dealing with a FL. Learners, according to Cave (1972: 268) should be trained to:

- a) plan the structure of a piece; whether it is narrative-descriptive, expository, or argumentative
  - b) choose the right focalization; Hayes (1996: 11) claims that “the acceptance of a writer’s argument may depend more on how the writer comes across as a person than on the logical quality of the argument itself”
  - c) use the connectives properly; understanding their importance and their function in the discourse
- Cave also advises to write about topics suggested in class, that are part of the learners’ interests, so

that the students will feel partly responsible for the direction taken by the writing course.

Tomlinson (1983: 8-9) adds, as fundamental prerequisites and learning points:

- 1) recognizing the type of written discourse they are asked to participate in
- 2) the functions they are required to perform
- 3) being able to use language structures and lexical items which are useful in this kind of discourse
- 4) knowing the aspects of register which are important in this type of discourse
- 5) being aware of the relevant conventions of written English (format, paragraphing, etc.)
- 6) knowledge of the relevant ways to achieve cohesion in writing
- 7) knowledge of the relevant ways to achieve coherence

Teaching how to write, states Rigo (2005: 175) is basically making students aware that they cannot expect to (and they are not even asked to, despite examinations seem to prove the opposite) write everything down in one go. They should know that writing is a process, and thereby process in stages. The first is planning, that can be further subdivided in: generation and organization of ideas, plus having in mind the basic purposes of the written work (clarity, coherence, etc.). A plan is not set in stone, it can change during the following stages, and it is not even that rich in details. It should merely mention what the main landmarks on the way are, as well as stating the end point of the paper.

Then we have the first draft, in which cognitive abilities and linguistic competences come into play to tie the ideas into a discourse. The last one, which LL rarely focuses enough on despite its significance, is revising. Indeed, the main difference between an experienced writer and a novice is that the first is able to revise efficiently, operating on the quality and not just correcting as many sentences as they can (operating on quantity). Honestly, it is quite hard to revise satisfactorily your own work (that is why, at a professional level, we have editors): one never truly sees what one has written through the eyes of someone else – so, in one's own mind everything does make sense – and, besides, it is not easy to give up parts of your own work and just cut them out. Major problems, Rigo (2005: 188) points out, arise in revision: abundance, lack or misuse of connectives; random use of punctuation (commas, in particular, seem to confuse most writers); paragraph subdivision and the structure of the text as a whole (which in Italy is due to the fact that in L1 one mainly writes compositions and content is valued more than organization).

Thomas, Torrence and Robinson (1994) observed how the rough drafts of 48 social science research students, who were asked to write two argument-based essays, were generally better than the revised versions. Both in terms of structure and content, which was more superficial. Students might be asked to look for trivial information inside the text and to put it out, a task that

could also help them with summaries. Or to improve the syntactical structure of a text by linking sentences, to choose the proper terms and use them instead of less connoted lexical items, to divide a composition into parts and give each of them a title. Scholars (Stallard, 1974; Perl, 1979; Faigley and Witte, 1981; cited in Fathman and Walley, 1990: 180) postulated that the good writer revise more than poor ones and that content is more revised than form. Sommers (1982; cited in *ibid*), however, observed that students tend to respond more to feedback and suggestions on form and ignore those on content.

Another stage in which students find themselves at a loss is the generation of ideas. Given a topic, many will immediately think “I don’t even know what to write”. Freewriting (or quickwriting), that is writing down everything that comes to one mind without worrying about relevancy or grammatical correctness (and if one does not know a term in English, he either leaves it blank or use the L1 word), activities can be performed so that pupils learn to shush that critical voice inside their heads that keeps asking “How do I say this in English? Is this spelled properly? Is this relevant to the topic?”. All these questions are necessary, but they should be asked and answered at the revision stage. Brown (1980; cited in Jacobs, 1986: 287) distinguishes between 'impulsive' and 'reflective' writers, claiming that quickwriting is better suited for the impulsive ones.

Other activities that may come in handy are brainstorming and discussing – or reading – on the topics students will be asked to write about. If they are required to compose papers on a subject they do not know that much about, learners should definitely be taught consultation techniques, as well as how to handle footnotes, references, bibliography and so on. As Sharples wrote in his *How we write* (1999: 73): “all writing can act as inspiration and source material for something else”.

Ideas can arise (Rigo, 2005: 215) through:

- 1) analogy: looking for concepts that corroborate the first idea;
- 2) opposition: juxtaposing opposite opinions on the matter (it works best in argumentative essays);
- 3) cause: an idea is presented as the result of certain circumstances that one is going to investigate;
- 4) consequence: analyzing the consequences brought by said idea;
- 5) precedence: looking for similar previous phenomena to relate them with the one he is discussing;
- 6) succession: looking for similar succeeding phenomena to relate them with the one discussed;
- 7) generalization: presenting norms and principles gathered from information at one's disposal;
- 8) exemplification: from a generic statement one looks for examples to clarify it;
- 9) personal experience: reporting events that are part of one's own personal experience;
- 10) authoritative experience: reporting events that are part of an authoritative figure's experience

In addition, Kroll (1990: 140) notices that limited time at their disposal hinders students

ability to produce a text with control over discourse organization and coherence. How should writing be evaluated, then? Heilenmann (cited in Haneda, 2007: 304) states that, in FL writing, most teachers devote their attention mainly to pointing out grammatical errors, even in drafts and dialogue journals. Studies (for further details see Fathman and Walley, 1990: 186) might have proved that grammar feedback has more effect on the correction of grammatical errors than content feedback actually improves. Still, Rivers (1981: 308-310) argues that many teachers expect a level of accuracy from their FL students that not even native speakers display. It is true, she concedes, that if accuracy has not a prominent role then students will tend to hand in careless work.

Nevertheless, there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration for the ability to use FL appropriately and flexibly. She suggests, then, that the grade should account for: a) syntactic choice and accuracy; b) lexical choice; c) proper expression of time sequences; d) general idiomaticity and feeling of “authentic expressions”. Suggestions for improvements should be made, along with mentions of good parts that have been written. Faced only with negative feedback and non-constructive criticism, students will become discouraged and revert to write very simple and basic sentences.

“When pupils understand that what their teachers are doing when they draw attention to features of their writing is offering help in overcoming problems, a genuine partnership can be set up. Pupils will know that their work be judged sympathetically, that its merits will be recognized, that its shortcomings will be described, and that effective help will be forthcoming to enable them to remedy the shortcomings. Nothing succeeds like success.” (Thornon; 1980: 40)

As reported by Hedge (1989: 149), an increasing number of teachers have noticed that correcting long after the event, when the writing experience has been forgotten, diminishes the effectiveness of corrections. Such disadvantage has been partly overcome by the introduction of word processors, which shift the focus from the product to the process and allows corrections to be made while the work is still in progress. What is more, Cuccu (2000: 16) observes that students live the LL experience more positively when computers are involved. Rigo (2005: 246) concurs, adding that using word processors in class promotes cooperative learning and allows one to manage a considerable amount of information, integrating it with charts and images. To the list of numerous pros she adds:

- a) faster execution speed;
- b) clarity and tidiness of the text;
- c) the opportunity to confront one’s work with that of its classmates;
- d) going back and forth on the text for little adjustments.

Using computers, though, has also a couple of demerits. Gould and Grischowsky (1984; cited in

Hayes, 1996: 7) detect deficiency at editing, when revision was done with the aid of a word processor. Haas (1987; cited in *ibid*) remarks that the undergraduate students in his research planned less if they were writing on the computer than they would have if writing with pen and paper. Despite presenting the advantages of word processors, Rigo (2005: 248) admits that it is harder to have an overall view of the written piece and so students tend to divide more into paragraphs, due to aesthetic reasons more than to the logic of the text. She refers to the work of Scavetta (1982) and Ricciardi (1995) who have both perceived the increased recourse to set phrases and colloquial expressions in writing with a word processor.

In conclusion, the goals (see Byrne, 1988: 7, 27) a writing program is strongly advised to pursue are:

- a) teaching learners how to write different kinds of texts (it is not enough to try to teach them a kind of 'neutral' general purpose form of written expression)
- b) exposing learners to more than one medium of language (thus writing has to be integrated with other codes)
- c) providing adequate and relevant experience of written language
- d) show the learners how the written language works as a communication system.

### 2.2.3. *Creative writing*

The concept of creative writing is particularly meaningful to our research. Generally speaking, it can be defined as that kind of writing through which the author expresses his feelings and thoughts in an imaginative, poetic way. Stories and narratives, after all, permeate everyone's lives. From the challenging "tell me about yourself" of a job interview to the intriguing "let me tell you a story". Story here is meant in its broadest sense, including also telling someone what you did last summer for example, while 'narrative' implies a certain degree of formality. The desire to share their own stories, then, is quite a powerful motivator for extrovert language learners. Sauv  (2005), though, warns against trivializing students' experiences. They should, indeed, be allowed not to participate in this activity if they do not feel comfortable enough to (journaling can be an alternative).

Moreover, Nicholas, Rossiter and Abbott (2011) recommend that teachers:

- help develop a class environment where learners do not feel judged for what they write neither by the instructor nor by their classmates;
- share their anecdotes with the class too;
- start with low-risk activities (e.g., an image bank to generate stories);
- start by focusing on content rather than form;

- use planning and redundancy of sentences' structures to enhance LL;
- are prepared to deal with controversial or difficult issues as they might arise

Creative writing can be described, by contrast, as a kind of writing that goes beyond a specific genre and does not have a specific purpose. Furthermore, what is narrated has to be clear of restrictions: in other words, if one plans to write an historic novel it is not that important to actually stay 100% true to history. Otherwise fictional characters, from whom we usually 'hear' the story, would not exist. What is crucial, instead, is to engage the readers in an intriguing story and being careful to use an historical background that will put not them off. On the basis of such freedom, the author can create his own world filled with his own characters.

Creative writing, however, does not mean pulling ideas out of a hat. It is undoubtedly freer than essays or articles, but the planning/drafting/revising sequence still needs to be followed. Tobias (1992: 2-3), in particular, insists on deciding what should be the starting and ending points of the story and then design short-term goals that should be reached within each section of the story.

Before our students engage themselves in creative writing, however, we have to make sure that they are familiar with the basic elements of narration, like: plot (adapt the plot to the characters and not the other way around), characters (one has to be consistent with their personalities, providing reason for eventual inconsistencies), setting, time frame of the events, focalization. They should already know about them, because they have dealt with narratology in their L1, but if they do not then teacher should revise the abovementioned elements. Learners must also get rid of the belief that being "creative" means to create something that has never been written before. Literature, in facts, shows several examples of masterpieces that have been inspired by previous works.

In terms of LL, it needs to relate to the age and needs of the learners. Dealing with children, it can be approached by activities on fairy tales such as rewriting them with a different ending, or mixing up characters. Series such as *Once Upon A Time* – which, however, is targeted to a much older audience - and Chris Colfer's *The Land Of Stories* show that an entire new universe can be created by using those characters everyone knows so well. The prompt could be "What if Red Riding Hood met Snow White, instead of the wolf, in the woods?" In a multicultural environment, besides, the use of fables can serve as an introduction to the fact that different cultures have different narratives; e.g. the foxes in Japanese folklore who use their cleverness to deceive and hurt people, while in European fables though they are cunning they are also harmless (see Favaro<sup>3</sup>;

---

<sup>3</sup><http://www.cremi.it/pdf/01.pdf> - *Atti del convegno* Storie narrate e storie di sé; Fano 10-11 Ottobre 2002 (Last consultation on 22/08/2013)

2002). As the learners grow older, they can be taught to write a story from scratch and let themselves be inspired by their own personal experience. They have to understand, without being afraid of it, that a writer always discloses parts of himself through his narrative. Therefore, creative writing can also be therapeutic and help learners decrease their anxiety levels – if done as a training activity and not as homework or a test that is going to be graded. Fairy tales and fables, by the way, can still quite useful in LL if presented in different languages and using a comparative method. After a brainstorm, and an analysis of the structural components that are shared by all languages (for fairy tales see Propp; 1966) students can be divided into groups and asked to rewrite the story in the FL, adding the elements that they see fit. Learners' imagination, along with peer education and cooperative learning methodologies, must be promoted. With adult students, teachers have to clarify as explicitly as possible the purpose of this kind of writing (promoting fluency and imagination, increasing lexis and idiomatic knowledge, decreasing anxiety, etc.), before asking them to write. Then, when they do write they must:

- 1) decide what their target audience is going to be;
- 2) do research about the topic they are going to deal with;
- 3) know the major literary works of the genre chosen;
- 4) decide which kind of language they are going to use. (if they plan to have a wide audience, regardless of how sophisticated they wish to sound, they must settle for colloquial register)

All of this can be performed in an organized context, through a well-designed training program.

#### *2.2.4. Affective factors in writing*

Even more than reading, writing tends to be sustained by an instrumental motivation. At work, as pointed out by Aldrich (1982), promotions can depend upon the ability to communicate clearly and exactly in the written form. She claims that inept writing (the one done without proper planning and revision) has not simply slowed productivity down or caused defaulted contracts but takes its toll on people's confidence, hopes and ambitions too. Brand (1990), instead, argues against the belief that a planned piece would be undoubtedly better than one composed as free writing. It is true, though, that the free writer can plan if asked – due the dominating process approach in the educational system – while planners find it really hard to do a free writing exercises.

According Brandt (1994), writing has not the same prestige as reading. Indeed, she has discovered through her interviews that writing is rarely seen a source of enjoyment. Besides, she has observed that it is not viewed as a tradition, as a ritual, something that parents teach their children for the sake of writing itself. At best it is a useful instrument to vent off anger, to give voice to sadness.



Csikszentmihalyi (1990), though, highlights the amazing opportunity of creating a fictional world more intriguing than the one we are living in. Indeed, Fishman et al. (2005) demonstrate that an intrinsic motivation to writing can be promoted as well. Especially by encouraging learners to engage in some extracurricular writing. If shared on the Internet, as it will be seen with fanfictions, writing can provide a sense of community and fulfillment. Feeling more self-confident and less afraid of judgment, students tend to expose themselves and risk a little more than they do at school. Of course, teacher should be mindful of McLeod (1994) warning against forcing the activity on pupils because that would undermine their intrinsic motivation and their self-determination. On the other hand, she has observed that if one writes regularly, regardless of readiness and mood, one produces not just more writing but more creative ideas too than do writers who wait for an ‘inspiration’.

McLeod also lists as an intrinsic motivation: the desire to do well, to look smart in the eyes of significant others. As for extrinsic motivations, she adds to job related achievements also the need to please the teacher and getting good grades.

The widespread belief that being a good writer is a natural talent, and therefore a skill of mysterious and inscrutable origin, does certainly provoke writing apprehension in those who think they were not ‘blessed’ with it. Brand (1990) assumes that students may feel more comfortable if the rhetorical requirements are spelled out for them. With regards to the beliefs, instead, McLeod (1987) observes that most people mistakenly presume that a writer: a) does not struggle but just waits for the inspiration to hit; b) has very good editing skills; c) can get better simply through the study of grammar.

Writing apprehension – or writing anxiety – thus, is a feeling of uneasiness (about oneself as a writer, about the situation, about the task itself) that makes composition much harder, because it disrupts the line of thoughts. Subjected to it, students feel incapacitated despite being intellectually capable to go through with the task successfully. A strong sense of self-efficacy, though, is crucial to improve one’s writing skill: Brand (1990) states that “if they enjoy it and feel they will do well, actual capabilities seem to matter less”. Therefore, if learners believe that they can achieve the desired outcome they will not let anxiety block them. McCarthy, Meier and Rinderer (1985) notice that students with a strong sense of efficacy wrote better essays than students with a weak sense of efficacy. Following Weiner’s attribution theory, one might feel less anxious if the shortcomings are seen as the result of something he has control over. In other words, if it is a lack of effort he can try and do better the following time. If, as hypothesized by Aldrich (1982), it is due to a lack of knowledge about planning and/or revising strategies, then it can be resolved by asking to the teacher

some specific training. When the blame falls on external factors, those that the learner has no control over (such as the teacher's bias), then there is little margin for improvement.

A problem that is highly connected to writing apprehension is called "writer's block". People have planned, they have a clear idea of what they mean to say and yet they cannot bring themselves to write it down. Boice (1993: 25-26) identifies, from 100 manuscripts, six common causes of this phenomenon:

- 1) *Internal censors* ("Am I allowed to write this? Is this the proper register?")
- 2) *Fear of failure* ("What if do not manage to write at least a page of this essay today? What if the professor thinks it is plagiarized?")
- 3) *Perfectionism* ("Could I express this concept better? Should I try and write something new, something original?"). Perfectionism leads to premature editing, and since perfection do not exist, the writer will always find something that can be improved.
- 4) *Early experiences* ("What if writing is as boring as it was in primary and middle school? If it has not been useful until yesterday, why should it be suddenly a valuable skill today?")
- 5) *Procrastination* ("Should I wait until inspiration strikes me? What if I write this section next week?")
- 6) *Mental health*; as Holkeboer (1986; cited in *ibid*) observed that writers receive a good deal of rejections and their rewards are delayed and that could undermine their mental stability.

### **2.3. Reading and writing fan fictions**

#### *2.3.1. What is a fan fiction?*

Fan fictions, or 'fan fics', are stories – which can be short (100 words minimum: drabble<sup>4</sup>) or very long<sup>5</sup> - based on books, movies, TV shows, anime, manga or videogames. In other words, it 'borrows' the characters (with their personality, their history and so on) from other entertainment sources and weave them into new narratives. Jenkins (1992), therefore, describes fan fic writers who trespass the fence of a 'cultural preserve' and hunt for characters, plots and settings. Parrish (2007), though, does not accept such a simplistic definition. Understandably, she argues that if one

---

<sup>4</sup> The term is said to have been coined by the Birmingham University Sci-Fi Society, who took the word "drabble" from a game in Monty Python's *Big Red Book*. The winner of said word game was the first who managed to write a novel. In order to make the game work in the real world, they agreed that 100 words would be enough.

<sup>5</sup> Currently, the longest fan fiction is *The Subspace Emissary's Worlds Conquest* which is a work in progress of 3,549,184 words. English is L2 for the author, as you can read here: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/josephbernstein/meet-the-college-junior-behind-the-longest-fan-fiction-ever>

takes for granted the “work written by using characters and/or narratives created by someone else” definition, then also literary masterpieces such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Mr. Rochester and Bertha belong to Charlotte Brontë, after all) or the entire production of Shakespeare (who reinterprets earliest myths and plays) would fall in this category. Consequently, the focus should shift from ‘fiction’ to ‘fan’.

Fans are different from the casual viewer (or reader, or gamer, or listener if we are dealing with radio shows and podcasts) because they have a deeper emotional involvement with the source material. So much that they feel the need to draw picture of the characters, write meaningful and insightful analysis of their behavior in a particular episode/chapter or even imagine what has not been shown yet or will not ever be shown. Missing moments, the past or the future of characters, how characters would react if put in a completely different setting, and much more compel them to write fan fics.

As a fan fic writer myself, one who started twelve years ago, I agree with both Parrish (2007) and Pugh (2005) that the difference between the literary works cited above and a fan fic is not in the quality of the writing but that there is no lucrative purpose in writing fan fictions. Fan fic writing is done for sheer pleasure of the activity itself or, especially for younger authors, to get some sort of recognition and positive feedback by people on the internet. Rhys and Shakespeare, on the other hand, published their work (or performed their plays, in Shakespeare’s case) in the hope to have some financial retribution for it. Nevertheless, literary blockbusters such as *Fifty shades of Grey* by E.L. James (originally a Twilight fan fic called “Master Of The Universe”) or *The Mortal Instruments* saga by Cassandra Claire (who is already known to her young adult target audience for having written “The Draco’s Trilogy”, a Harry Potter fan fic) demonstrate that professional writing and fan fic writing can in fact intersect.

Parrish (2005) also refuses the term ‘poachers’ referred to fan fic writers. She finds it demeaning, since it suggests that they steal from source texts rather than reinterpret them.

### 2.3.2. *Where does fan fiction come from?*

Historically, fan fictions are born in the late 1960s: more precisely when the first story written by a fan was published in a fanzine (fan magazine) in 1967<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, Hale (cited in Derecho 2006: 62) traces the origin of fan fictions back to Jane Austen and Sherlock Holmes fan societies in the 1920s.

---

<sup>6</sup> In the magazine *Spokanalia*, the first fanzine related to Star Trek.

An unexpected involvement of the community of fans (referred to as “fandom”, from here on), however, could already be witnessed back in 1893 when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tried to kill off his most famous character: Sherlock Holmes. Pugh (2005: 17-19) reminds us that there have been 20,000 unsubscriptions from *The Strand* magazine, where his stories were published, after *The adventure of the final problem* was out. People sent Conan Doyle hate mail, they walked into the streets of London wearing mourning bands. It also led a fan, called William Gillette, to buy the rights to a Sherlock Holmes play in 1899.

Although this play cannot be called a fan fiction, it is a prime example of the two main reasons why fans feel the need to write about a particular subject: they want to see “more of” or “more from” the source material. Therefore, it is not because they are too “lazy” to create their own narrative universe, as some professional writers seem to suggest.

Jenkins (2006a), indeed, has observed how fandom has its foundations on fascination and frustration over the source material. If it did not fascinate us, we would not have been interested enough to read other people’s opinion (or desired outcomes, in fan fic) about it; if it did not frustrate us we would not have engaged ourselves in writing to have “more of” or “more from” it. Pugh (2005: 46) believes that the “what if?” and the “what next?” attitudes so instilled in our natural curiosity are responsible for a lot of fan fic. She also observed (ibid: 19) that in the 70s and the 80s science-fiction and police shows, which traditionally have a wider male than female fan base, were the shows that inspired fan fic writers the most and that said writers were nearly all women. Coppa (2006: 51) notices that it was during these two decades that fandom really grew and spread, due both to the massive quantity of entertainment materials from which one could take inspiration from and to the strong inclination towards research of most media fans in those days.

From what I have observed both in my research and in my personal experience in the fandom, the predominance of girls and women in this field has not changed. Jenkins (2006b: 41) relates this fact to Bleich’s research in 1986, which noticed a different approach to a story between males and females. While women seem to be more interested in the psychological side of the narrative, that is to say the motivations behind a character’s behavior, and more prone to play with the story content men tend to concentrate more on the action itself and be satisfied with the story as it is. In retelling Faulkner’s *Barn Burning* Bleich observed that:

The men retold the story as if the purpose was to deliver a clear and simple structure or chain of information: these are the main characters, this is the main action, this is how it turned out... The women present the narrative as if it were an atmosphere or an experience. (Bleich, “Gender interest in reading and language”, p. 256)

Derecho (2006: 71), instead, argues that fan fiction is the literature of the subordinate and therefore women are responding to products that are characterized by an underrepresentation of women.

Personally, I would argue that if that was indeed true then one of the most popular fan fic genres would not be “slash fiction”, that portrays an homosexual relationship between two men and tends to ignore even the very few female characters present in the source materials.

As for the average age range, it goes from thirteen to thirty<sup>7</sup>. The dominant language is English, since from the late 80s the discussions and the creative works began moving from the fan magazine to the Internet. Whereas fanzines would likely reach a limited number of fans, most of whom American – or British, if the original work was aired/published in UK – the Internet made it possible for it to be read by whoever has the opportunity to surf. Busse and Hellekson (2006: 16) claim that the increasingly easier access to online fandoms has resulted in a demographical shift from older to younger audiences. Most of these young people, however, write in their L1 and that is why I found only two girls under nineteen who replied to my questionnaire that required a FL learner.

Indeed, not everyone feels comfortable writing in a FL but if one desires to have the widest readership possible – and it has been mentioned above that young writers do tend to write to have some sort of recognition, otherwise they would keep what they write for themselves – one has to overcome such uneasiness and either translate the stories from the L1 or to write them straight into English. As one grows older and discovers the intricacies of translating, especially from L1 to FL – when even professional translators work from FL to L1 – the second strategy becomes the more widespread.

Blake (2005: 123) has shown that even when the source material is not coming from an English speaking country, as in the case of Japanese anime *Card Captor Sakura*, the majority of stories are written in English. She also witnesses an active interest in researching on an another culture, different from the one the writers belong to, if only to get the details – the scholastic system, the daily routine, the society and its festivities – right.

### 2.3.3. *Fan fictions and reading in English*

Apart from enriching the lexis people have at their disposal, fan fiction might contribute to the development of two fundamental reading strategies: scanning and skimming. In fact, when the

---

<sup>7</sup> Since, theoretically, it is forbidden to people under 13 to join internet communities, archives and social networks it is quite hard to find writers younger than 13. The people I interviewed, though, are mostly between 25 and 30. Many of them, however, joined fandoms and started writing in their L1 when they were teenagers.

amount of stories is overwhelming (as, for example, in *Harry Potter* section on FF.net) fans either trust the synopsis or they resort to scanning through the stories and see which one seems to be the most interesting. If they wish to see how an author has handled a particular situation – anticipated in the synopsis or related to the source material, if dealing with a fill-in fan fiction – they skim through the fan fics looking for a specific moment. Of course, since reading fan fiction is done for fun, extensive reading is involved more often than not. Yet, reading in a FL – especially if the reader is at an intermediate level, rather than advanced – requires more effort than reading in L1. Besides, nobody would like to waste time reading something awful. Therefore, even when such strategies are not taught in school, fan fic readers learn scanning and skimming to find stories that are worth their efforts and time.

As time goes by and one's knowledge of English increases, one starts to notice more than just the plot or the grammatical correctness of a fan fic, and learns to appreciate also the use of the language of talented writers. How they use different voices, different styles of writing, according to the character they are talking about. How they show their versatility, as Elizabeth in Penzato's (2012: 12-15) study, by shifting their tone depending on what kind of fan fiction they are writing. In other words, little by little one becomes a critical reader. Furthermore, if fans wish to leave insightful feedback they should be at least able to say what was their favorite part and why.

Fan fiction, by the way, offers the opportunity to have a direct link with the authors so that, if readers come up with speculations and/or interpretations they are able to address them straight to the fan fic's writers. Their replies tend to be something along the lines of "Oh, I never saw that episode in this light." or "Oh, I hadn't thought of that. Thank you." or the teasing "Well, that was an interesting speculation... Stay tuned to see if you guessed right." Suggestions, either regarding the plot or the handling of characters, are usually offered only if explicitly asked by the author. As discussed previously in this chapter (see 2.1), despite academic insistence on planning, not everyone knows in advance what they want to say. Some find out while writing: conversations with readers might be quite influential on which direction one's story should take.

In my research, I attempted to discover if what has been stated above is only a personal interpretation of the phenomenon or if fan fictions are actually useful in enhancing reading skills. Replies, as it will be seen, tend to refer to the widening of the lexis but not to reading strategies.

#### 2.3.4. *Fan fictions and writing in English*

Penzato (2012) case studies have demonstrated that no relation is perceived between academic writing and fan fic. Nonetheless, she did notice that the interviewees possessed far more editing

skills than other researchers (such as Sommers, 1980) attributed to student writing. What is more, some fan fiction genres (such as crossover or AU; see 3.5) require the author to try and put himself in his readers' shoes. Will he give them some background, or expect them to understand from the start?

Other kinds of fan fictions, such as prequels, sequels and fill-ins ask the author to wonder how much should he/she stick to canon. Although many fan fic writers would claim that they simply write following their inspiration, not with any potential readership in mind, I believe it is inevitable to end up having to answer the aforementioned questions, even doing so subconsciously. After all, the ideal reader can as well be the author himself, striving to write a story he will be satisfied with and will enjoy rereading in the future. Fan fictions, therefore, can help introduce the concept of writing for a purpose and for an audience. To hand in essay that they are satisfied with, being able to tell the reason for such a good feeling. Besides, with writing challenges they become accustomed to restraints: either of topic or of particular terms and/or themes that have to be included (as known as "prompts"), of length and so on.

In addition, particularly when dealing with movies and TV shows, there is the choice of which variety to use in the first place. Often it is the source material itself that leads the writer to choosing British English when writing fan fics based on British media and American for stories inspired by American TV series and movies. Other fan fic writers, as will be shown in Chapter 5 and 6, simply go for the variety they are most comfortable with. For some it can be British, since it is the one studied in Italian schools. For others it can be American, since many fan fics they read online use this variety, as well as many TV shows/movies that they watch. It might also lead to a strange mix of British spelling of American slang or the other way around.

There are authors (such as Rice or Martin) who forbid writing fan fictions based on the stories, because it implies that readers feel a kind of ownership on characters they loved very much – and suggest that they might understand them even more than their creator (see Pugh, 2005). Still, as Stasi (2006: 130) points out: "Concepts such as intellectual property, originality, and individual genius are relatively newcomers in literature". This also means that writers should not be afraid of rewriting stories about topics abundantly explored by the fandom already. Coppa (2006: 138), in fact, believes it is unavoidable that future supplements to the same canon are produced and that "they aren't any more redundant than multiple productions of Hamlet."

### *2.3.5. Fan fictions and language learning motivation*

Writing at or for school, as well as reading, is often perceived as a chore. Even though one loves

reading, when they are not given any amount of control over their learning they are likely to end up hating the book. The reason behind such behavior, as said in Chapter 1, is that humans act by following a self-determinant drive. Asking students to read a work, any work, by Austen is different from asking them to read “Pride and prejudice” without a choice – especially if they have not been given a reason why it must be that book and not any other.

Fan fictions, on the other hand, can count on the innate need to give facts a chronological order and share them – together with one’s feelings – in a narration (Cavarero, 1982: 182). Nelson (1989) and Pontecorvo (1997: 141) have both observed that children at the age of two, along with learning their L1, start telling stories about themselves. Composing stories, then, is something that we are accustomed to doing since a really young age. As a result, when reassured that there is no ‘silly’ content in creative writing, students are more prone to believe that everyone has a story to tell and worth sharing. They can be the main characters – and it becomes a fan fic when they choose celebrities (real person fiction or RPF) as co-protagonists - or they can choose to use characters they have studied in literature or have seen on television. They are motivated by the pleasure of writing, of sharing part of themselves or of their imagination with the class. Certainly, it could be argued that it would be unproductive to focus merely on storytelling. On the other hand, once students are engaged in a narration we can ask them to perform tasks such as “Your main character has to write a resignation letter (the reason is up to you)” and include said letter in the story of why someone decides to quit their job. Other textual genres, therefore, can be trained while writing a fan fiction. Of course, the same cannot be said for text types. Teachers can hardly find a way to make argumentative or expository texts part of a story too. However, they are still able to point out that even scientific papers and articles follow a narrative, especially if they intend to be educational. The text becomes the retelling of the adventure that led the researchers to their conclusions. Responding to the need to have a wider vocabulary at their disposal, to the desire of being read also by an international public, fan fictions have the potential of being a motivation to study English. Perhaps not a beginner’s level, but probably at an intermediate and advanced one as an incentive to improve one’s skills. This is part of what I tried to investigate in my research.

### *2.3.6. Fan fictions and language learning anxiety*

While most researchers, amongst whom Horwitz is the most prominent figure, relate LL anxiety to oral performance I happened to notice – both in my scholastic experience and as a fan fiction writer – that LL anxiety can be experienced in reading and writing too. As stated in Chapter 1, when it comes to reading it is a fear of not understanding every single word of the text. However, since fan



fictions mainly involve young people (that is to say that writers might be the same age of one's students, maybe a little older) the language and the structures tend to be quite simple. Besides, most people are more interested in the plot – is the author finally going to give that character what I feel he/she deserves? – than having a 100% comprehension of what has been written. The more they read, seeing again on screen idioms and words that they already have heard in the TV show/movie (therefore, having a clear context in my mind), the more they learn. Others, however, prefer to read a translation and that is why some readers/authors with a better knowledge of English take it upon themselves to translate their favorite stories from the FL to Italian (after asking for permission to the author of the English fan fiction, of course). Still, the fact that there are so many stories that they cannot read serves as incentive to learn English so that they do not have to wait for a translation that might never come.

As for writing apprehension, instead, one might feel afraid of:

- 1) making too many mistakes (one, however, soon finds comfort in the fact that L1 authors often write 'your' instead of 'you're' and misspell words...);
- 2) sounding too superficial; losing one's style;
- 3) sounding stilted, or having the readers failing to understand what you meant to say because you used an unusual word order or an obscure idiom.

Writing straight in English, instead of translating from Italian, tends to help in keeping a linear and simple structure. Still, if the author wishes to go for a conversational register – whether she/he means to use it in a dialogue or to write an introspective piece – it becomes quite clear that English is not her/his L1. On the other hand, one might feel disheartened about having a very good knowledge of English but never reaching a native competence of it.

Moreover, it is very much appreciated to keep the characters very similar to those readers are familiar with (from the books/TV shows/movies, etc.) both in terms of behavior and 'voices' (how a character thinks and speaks). Having a reviewer telling you that your Hermione "sounded exactly as the Hermione we all know!" is a high praise for a fan fiction writer. Even more satisfying, as Pugh (2005) states, is when people read your stories even not knowing the fandom but simply because they think of you as a good writer.

Writing fan fictions, therefore, can be a source of both anxiety and achievement. The aim, in this research, is to investigate to what extent writing apprehension influences fan fic writing.

### *2.3.7. Fan fiction types and genres*

As has been established, fan fictions are narrative texts. They offer the opportunity to people to

engage in a textual type that is often overlooked in school, taught superficially at beginner level when one is supposed to learn how to talk about oneself and others both as regards L1 and FLs. However, as with expository and argumentative papers, a story too has to take into account the reader's expectations. For fan fics, it is such a crucial point that one is expected to tell the audience beforehand, at the beginning of the fic, what they are going to find in the story.

A writer, hence, has to ask himself several questions and use the proper micro-language of fan fictions:

1) Do I want my narration to include a romantic love story (or a hook up of any kind) or do I prefer to focus on my hero's journey, during which he might or might not become friends with other people?

If the answer is the latter, I will label my story as **gen** (generic); if it features a relationship between two men and it is based on western media then it is **slash** (if it is based on Japanese media it is called **yaoi**); **femslash** when the relationship is between two women (**yuri** if based on manga or anime); **het** (short for "heterosexual").

2) If it is not **gen**, which are the main **ships** (short for "relationships"; in fan fic-speak **shipping** means to want to see two – or more – characters together) featured?

3) Is it going to be a multi-chaptered story or a one-shot?

One-shot is a term to define a short, finished, story that has no chapters.

4) How does it relate to the **canon**?

With the word 'canon', fans mean what is stated as a fact in the source material. It is canon that Lizzy and Darcy get married at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*. Canonically they are both proud. If one was to write a fan fic with a meek and insecure Darcy, she either has to justify this unusual portrayal of his personality or warn the reader that her Darcy will be OOC (out of character).

**Fanon**, on the other hand, is something that has never been stated in the source material but it has been taken for granted by the fandom. For example, there is one character in the TV show *Teen Wolf* who is believed to suffer from ADHD but that has never been said out loud in the show. His best friend asks him "How much Adderall have you had today?" in the first episode of the first season, and he replies "A lot.". From then on, there is no other mention to psychoactive drugs but it has been established that Stiles Stilinski has ADHD.

**Headcanon**, moreover, refers to details not told in the book or shown in the movies/TV show that are valid only in the mind of the writer. As for 'fanon' elements, one is not expected to justify the

choice narratively. If one's headcanon is that Heathcliff is Catherine's half-brother, who could contradict her/him when Emily Brontë does not really tell her readers where Mr. Earnshaw found the little boy?

5) What happened to Hermione Granger in the summer between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> book of the Harry Potter saga?

I chose this example to present another kind of story: the fill-in or missing moment(s) fan fiction. Here the writers explore events only hinted at in the source material, or unexplored time lapses in the canonical narration. The fill-in fan fic can also be the retelling of a story from a different point of view, as Rhys did with Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In any case, it requires a profound knowledge of its source(s), to be believable and avoid contradicting what has happened before. Contradicting what will happen after the "missing moment", instead, is unavoidable if one is writing about shows that are still on air. One can have a talk between two characters, or compose an introspective piece to delve into the antagonist's point of view, and then have those two character (or the antagonist) explicitly state that such a talk never happened or that the villain's reasoning could not be more distant from what one thought, in the following episode. The same goes, of course, for all other kinds of 'works-in-progress' (e.g. *A song of ice and fire* by George R.R. Martin, a literary fantasy saga that is still not completed).

6) What if Jean Valjean stole a loaf of bread nowadays?

Of course Jean Valjean and the loaf of bread today are an example, it could be any character put in any other era that is different from the one of the source material. Such a question would lead to rewriting *Les Misérables* in a modern setting. The resulting story would not be compliant with Hugo's canon and therefore it would be labeled as a **modern AU** (where AU stands for "alternative universe). There are all kinds of alternative AUs in the fandom and it is quite challenging to stay true to a character, for example Spock from Star Trek, if one puts him back in high school or imagines how he would be as a Roman gladiator.

7) What if Sherlock Holmes met Poirot?

When the question implies that inspiration has been taken from two different sources and the story makes the two narrative universes meet, we are dealing with a **crossover** fan fiction.

Again, it is quite difficult to have the aforementioned meeting without alienating the audience. Not many writers, indeed, are able to pull this off successfully. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Parrish (2007), when feedback is actually offered it tends to be enthusiastic and encouraging even when the

fan fic is actually not that good. She notices that most reviewers refrain from sounding too critical, afraid they might sound like “an English teacher”. Since the association is, unfortunately, a negative one, they want to avoid such an occurrence.

Naturally, as Scodari and Felder (2000) suggest, academics who are also fans tend to perceive a greater degree of self-awareness and critical thinking than the fandom actually possesses so this should be considered while reading what has been stated above and throughout this whole chapter.

### 2.3.8. *Where does one find fan fictions?*

In the late 60s and early 70s fan fictions were submitted to fanzines, went through evaluating and editing from the people who ran the fanzine in the first place and only then they were published. Nowadays, on the contrary, the process is much more immediate. Studies such as the brief one by Brobeck in 2004 (cited in Parrish, 2007), who observed and analyzed *Henneth-Annûn* – a Lord Of The Rings fan fiction archive – demonstrate that some archives are moderated. On said website, in fact, a fan fic has to be approved by a nine-member panel of reviewers before being uploaded. On *Bits of Ivory*, the fan fiction section of *The Republic Of Pemberley*<sup>8</sup> – a fansite devoted to Jane Austen, cited in Pugh (2005: 39) – stories have to go through moderation first and only if they follow the site’s guidelines and are proved to be written in a style similar to Austen’s will they be published. While Pugh believes such strict rules stifle creativity and lower stories’ quality, Brobeck claims that this encourages writers to revise their work more carefully.

On most archives, though, the upload and publishing of the fan fic happens simultaneously. That is to say that the moderation phase happens afterwards, once the fan fic is already out there for everyone on the Internet to read. Usually stories are not taken off because of their debatable quality, not only in terms content but also regarding spelling and grammar, but because they violate the archives’ guidelines. Guidelines may focus on formatting requirements, such as: no caps lock, no other fonts than Times New Roman (size 12) or Arial (size 10-11), proper use of paragraphs. Or on the content that is not allowed, for example “stories featuring a relationship between an adult and an underage character are not allowed”.

Although every fansite devoted to a particular work tends to have a section devoted to fan works, and therefore fan fics, writers usually prefer to go for general non moderated archives such as:

---

<sup>8</sup> The Republic Of Pemberley is the name of the website: <http://www.pemberley.com/>

## 1) Fan fiction.net<sup>9</sup> (also known as “FFN” or “FF.net”):

Founded in 1998<sup>10</sup>, this is the most well-known, and most cited general archive online. By using the word ‘general’, it is meant that it allows works coming from numerous media fandom, as can be seen here in Figure 4:

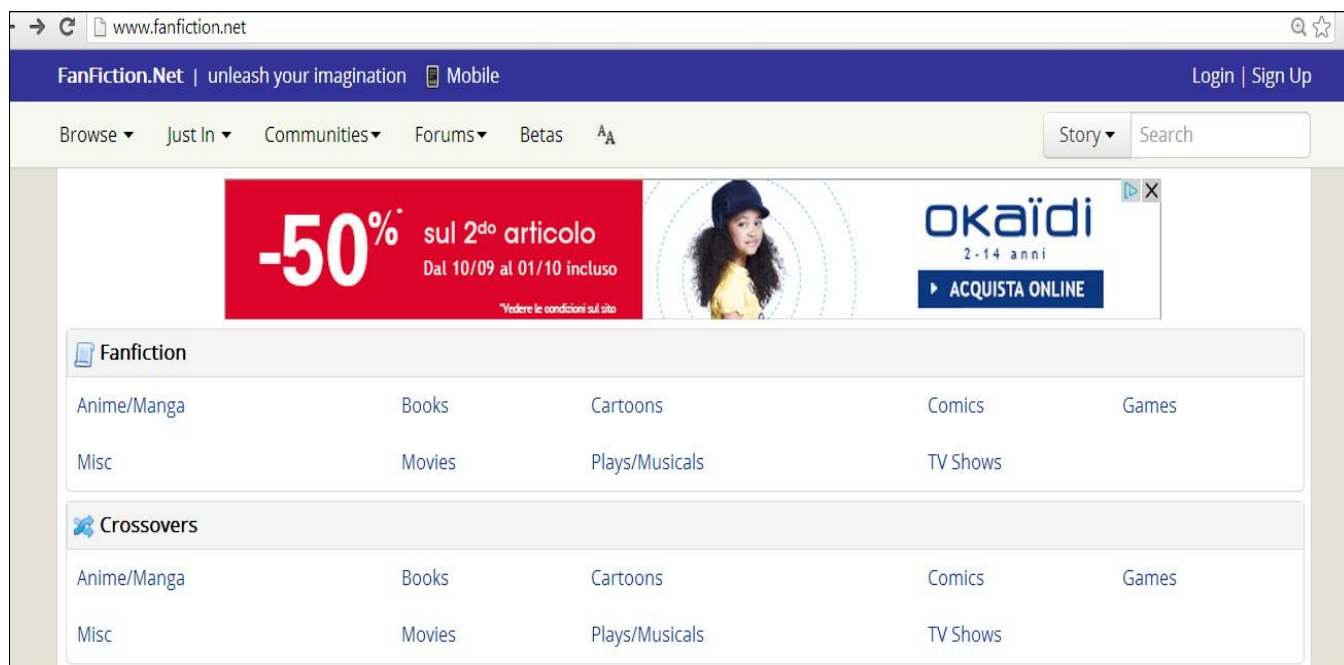


Figure 4. Fan fiction.net homepage

Since it is an American website, it also differentiates between Western and Eastern media: it has anime and manga (which fall under one category, despite manga being on paper and anime on television), Cartoons and Comics. ‘Dramas’, that is to say Eastern (Japanese and Korean ones are currently the most widespread) serial TV shows are together with American, European and Australian ones in the “TV Shows” category. Under the “Misc” category we find crossovers, even though they have a section devoted to them. Talking about numbers, the *Harry Potter* section alone hosts – as of today, 21/09/2013, but probably tomorrow there might be more – 659,000 fan fictions. Together with the other four most prolific literary fandoms (the *Twilight*, the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* and the *Hunger Games* sagas, *Lord Of The Rings*) the number rises up to nearly one

<sup>9</sup> Statistic data relevant to this website can be found here: <http://www.alexacom/siteinfo/fanfiction.net>  
Even though it is not possible to see the age range, it is interesting to notice that most of the users access to the website from school.

<sup>10</sup> <http://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanfiction.net> (last view: 21/09/2013)

million stories. Since, currently, there are 1,948 titles listed in the “Books” category, it is safe to claim that FF.net hosts an astonishing amount of stories. Not every story is in English, though: in a worldwide famous fandom such as *Harry Potter* stories writers and readers can choose among thirty-eight different languages. Still, by filtering by language one can see that the majority of those 659,000 fan fics – that is to say 412,000 – are written in English and that the first one was published fourteen years ago.

A unique feature of this homepage is a direct link to the “Betas” section. Betas stands for “beta-readers”, which is a loan from the informatics field (beta programs are the ones out for evaluation of a few, so that errors can be corrected and the best version of the programs be commercialized) to define a proof-reader. Browsing the aforementioned section we can see that it is subdivided in the same fandoms of the homepage, and by taking a look to at one of the betas profile (Figure 5) we can see that she/he offers her/his help by stating strengths and weaknesses. Since a betas’ help can be asked for plot-wise, it is not indispensable that their L1 is English but they must be critical readers.

| Beta Description   |
|--|
| <p>Beta Bio: general description as a beta reader</p> <p>I am a teacher-trainee (English subject) who is currently trying to sharpen my editing and proofreading skills. My spellings follow that of British English (including but not limited to NZ/AU/MY), but I am just as knowledgeable in the rules of the American English spellings. I hope to assist aspiring writers in their efforts to produce decent works for their readers.</p> |
| <p>My Strengths: beta, writing, or reading strengths</p> <p>Grammar and constructions Literary language Editing and Proofreading</p> <p>I'm also very patient, which I think is important when dealing with a piece of work laden with errors.</p>   |
| <p>My Weaknesses: beta, writing, or reading weaknesses</p> <p>I usually take more than one day to thoroughly proofread a piece of writing, making sure that it is nice and clean.</p>  |
| <p>Preferred: types of stories I prefer over others</p> <p>I don't have anything specific. Anything goes.</p>  |

Figure 5. A beta’s profile on FF.net

Whilst proofreaders and editors are not cited in the books we read, betas are seen as co-authors and will be credited while presenting one’s fan fiction. As in “this story has been beta read by *JohnDoe89*”.

## 2) Archive Of Our Own<sup>11</sup>:

Also known as “AO3”, this archive was founded by the Organization of Transformative Works<sup>12</sup> in 2009<sup>13</sup> as a place to host several types of fan works. Indeed, on AO3 one can find fan art and fan mixes (the evolution of those ‘mix-tapes’ most of us used to dedicate to someone, in our adolescence) as well as fan fictions. Although one has to be invited from another person who is already a member of AO3 to join the site – and therefore be able to upload one’s fan fics – there are 834,730 works in 13,022 fandoms to date, produced by its 208,826 members.

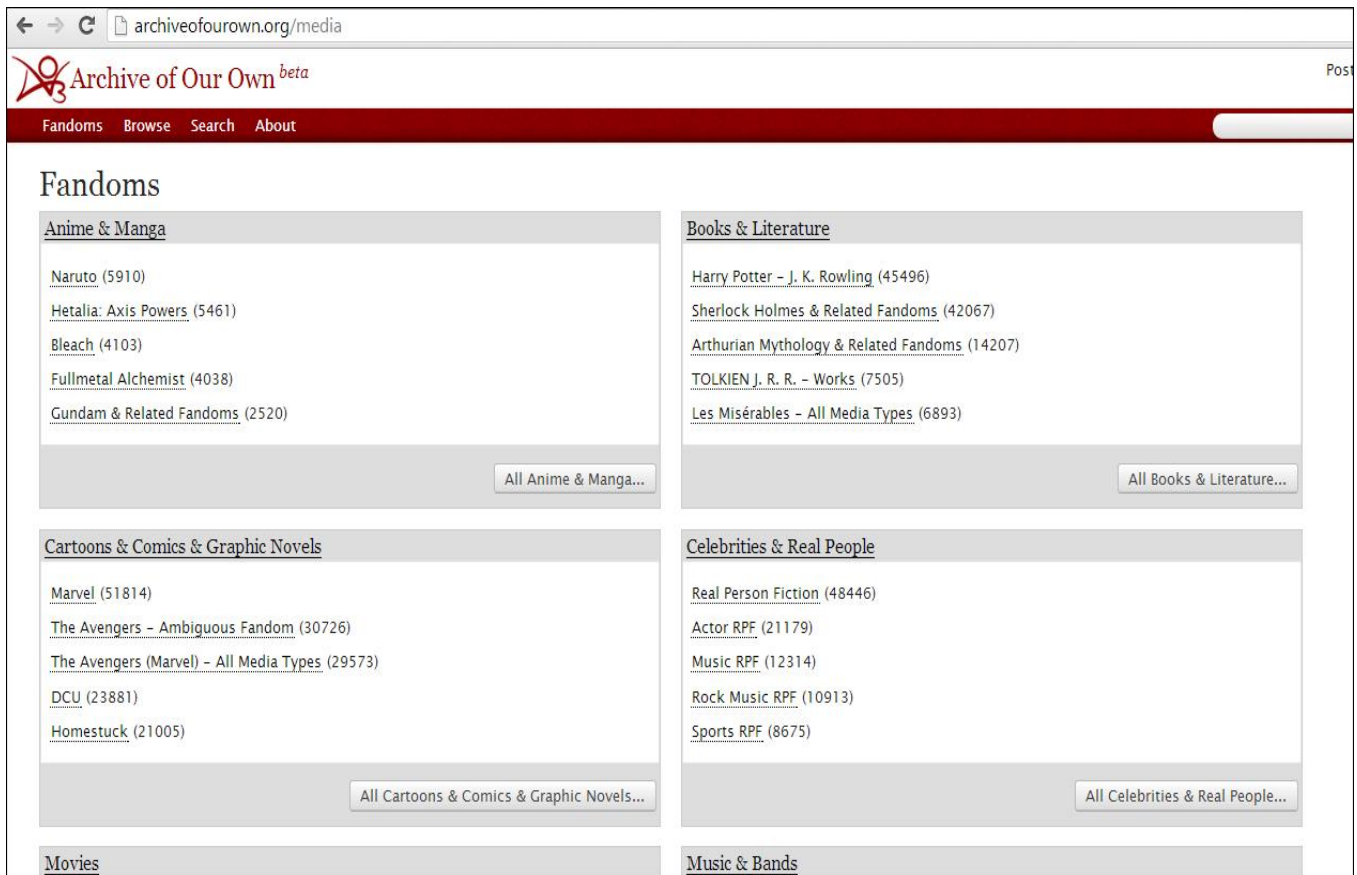


Figure 6. AO3 Media Page

The same differentiation made on FF.net can be observed, but “Cartoon&Comics” are put together

<sup>11</sup> Statistics relevant to this website can be found here: <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/archiveofourown.org>. Here it can be observed that most access to AO3 is from home and that most of its users are attending college.

<sup>12</sup> <http://transformativeworks.org/> (last view on 21/09/2013). As it can be seen from the “Board Of Directors” (under the “About TOW” section) it is run mainly by academics. From the home page it is also clear that articles written about fan culture are crucial to this organization.

<sup>13</sup> [http://fanlore.org/wiki/Archive\\_of\\_Our\\_Own](http://fanlore.org/wiki/Archive_of_Our_Own)

as “Anime&Manga” are. From filtering by language it becomes clear that English is, again, the most dominant language. For example, in the “Marvel” section (which counts, in total, 51814 works) 48,631 works are in English. AO3 lists fifty-one languages, but only seventeen are used in this fandom. Aside from English there is quite a good numbers of stories in: Russian (395), Spanish (349), French (259), Italian (170) and Chinese (164).

### 3) Erika Fan fiction Page (EFP):

This is an Italian archive, which also accepts stories translated from other languages which encourages LL who know a FL quite well to try and translate their favorite fan fictions so that more people can enjoy them. Its name is due to the fact that it was born as a personal archive, at the end of 2000. Then the owner, as she recalled for the website tenth birthday, started asking her favorite authors if she could update their fan fictions on her website and soon the submissions started to arrive (especially after the most famous Italian general archive, “Fan fiction.it” closed down).

The screenshot shows the homepage of EFP (Erika Fan Fiction Page). The website has a blue header with the EFP logo and the tagline "Il tuo sito di fanfiction". Navigation links include FANFICTION, ORIGINALI, LISTE, CERCA, and REGOLE/AIUTO. There are also social media icons for email, a user profile, and Facebook. The main content area is divided into two sections: "Fanfiction" and "Storie originali, per genere".

**Fanfiction categories:**

- Anime & Manga (80226) - Naruto
- Artisti musicali (68785)
- Attori (6037)
- Crossover (635)
- Film (7693)
- Fumetti/cartoni americani (3927)
- Fumetti/Cartoni europei (918)
- Giochi di Ruolo (529)
- Libri (65123) - Harry Potter - Twilight
- Serie TV (33558)
- Teatro e Musical (119)
- Videogiochi (7135)

**Storie originali, per genere:**

- Avventura (831)
- Azione (338)
- Comico (1350)
- Commedia (1065)
- Drammatico (6338)
- Epico (340)
- Fantascienza (701)
- Fantasy (4132)
- Favola (782)
- Generale (6286)
- Giallo (333)
- Horror (1665)
- Introspeettivo (8686)
- Noir (491)
- Nonsense (2979)
- Poesia (11786)
- Romantico (17700)
- Soprannaturale (3865)
- Storico (1190)
- Thriller (448)

**Benvenuti su EFP!**  
 Tre regole molto importanti:  
**I** - in questo sito si pubblicano solo storie (fanfiction e originali).  
 Niente petizioni; saggi, dediche, scritti da blog personale o altro. Se avete un dubbio, chiedete.  
**II** - sono vietati plagii di qualunque cosa (sia di altre storie che, ovviamente, di opere protette da copyright)  
**III** - per qualunque problema o controversia nel sito, contattate l'amministrazione

**Utenti registrati:** 299681, di cui 116770 autori  
 Ultimo arrivato: emma\_2607  
 Totale storie: 345957  
 Totale capitoli: 1238624 capitoli  
 Totale recensioni: 4705591  
 ( Utenti online: 346 loggati e 246 ospiti )

Figure 7. EFP home page

It has 116,770 users actively writing and a total of 345,957 stories. *Harry Potter* fan fiction amount to 46,322, followed closely by the *One Direction* – a British boyband – fandom that counts 39,967 works making them the most prominent fandoms on the website.

Being European, it differentiates between “Anime&Manga”, “American comics/cartoons” and



“European comics/cartoons”. A category that has not been found neither on FF.net or AO3 is “Giochi di ruolo” (Role Player Games), which are narration games and can indeed inspire a fan fiction, as studied by Thomas (2006). Moreover, it is interesting to acknowledge the fact that also original stories are accepted – but petitions, essays, blog entries are not - and that plagiarism is felt as such a big issue that a warning against it is present on the home page.

Not everyone who writes stories in Italian uploads them on EFP, they might go for Livejournal (LJ) or AO3, but there is hardly an Italian fan fic writer who is not aware of its existence.

LJ, however, is technically not an archive but a blogging platform. Even though there are ‘communities’ where numerous users intervene and send their stories to, most of them are devoted to a single work. That is why I chose not to include it amongst the “general non moderated archives”, even though it hosts many fan fictions.

### 2.3.9. *Who writes fan fictions and who read them?*

Fan fictions in one’s L1, as mentioned, tend to be written by women between the age of thirteen and thirty (see Penzato: 2012). Males, therefore, are largely underrepresented. It is worth mentioning, however, that *The Subspace Emissary’s Worlds Conquest* (the longest piece of fiction ever) is written by a young man attending college for whom English is L2.

Black (2005), indeed, notices that there are many English language learners (ELL) who are writing and/or reading and reviewing fan fictions in English on the abovementioned archives or on other online communities. Willingly they spend hours reading and composing (either reviews or stories, or both) in a language which is not their own with the help of online dictionaries such as *Word Reference* or *Urban Dictionary* when in class it is hard to have them write a one-page long essay even when the topic is relevant to their interests. With the teacher as a the target reader of one’s work in mind, in fact, there are people who strive for perfection (never attaining it, forced to hand in a draft due to time constraints) either to get a good grade or because they value the teacher’s opinion and dislike letting him/her down. Unfortunately, the fact that mistakes (either syntactical or about content) are something to be ashamed of has been ingrained in most students and the more one is proficient in a FL the more it seems silly to make such “stupid” mistakes, not considering that one would hardly obtain a flawless essay even in their L1.

On the other hand, unless asked to be harsh, it has been previously stated that most fan fiction reviewers point out the strengths of one’s work and tend to be forgiving of weaknesses; especially if one states “I am sorry, English is not my first language” at the beginning of a fan fic, even though they could ask for a beta if they do not feel confident in their English skills. Providing feedback,

however, as pointed out by Parrish (2007), is not the norm of a fan fiction community. Most readers do not leave a token of their appreciation or a mention of their aversion to the story. To widen their audience, increasing the possibilities of having some sort of feedback at the same time, some authors decide to write in English. They are mostly high-school and college students, with at least a B1 knowledge of said FL. They might have not reached only through school, but thanks to watching TV shows in American or English – made much easier by the Internet, along with DVDs – and to reading stories in English. As we have seen, the number of Italian fan fictions on EFP cannot compare with the amount of stories present on FF.net and AO3. Moreover, people might want to read about works that are mostly unknown to the Italian public so they have to look for English fan fictions. Another trend is therefore clear here: writers of fan fictions in English are readers too, whereas readers are not necessarily writers. This will be even clearer throughout the analysis of the data gathered in this research, where all of the 35 people interviewed have read fan fictions in English but not everyone has also engaged in writing.

It is not necessarily a matter of not feeling confident in one's English skill, but it can be also due to the fact that Italian and English have different parameters for "good writing". Being simple and linear might be felt as being superficial. Some of the respondents, indeed, justified the fact that they do not write in English by stating that even if they could express the same concepts in a FL such thoughts, notions and feelings seems lacking the same depth they had in Italian. Consequently, even people who are proficient in all four communicative skill might not feel like writing fan fictions in English.

### *2.3.10. The multimodality of fan works*

Stein (2006: 249) points out that many tools are used to create and share fan texts. Along with Microsoft Word, Open Office and Internet, other media can be included too. A fan fic can have a soundtrack, made by the author himself or by a reader who liked the story very much. Writing challenges like Big Bang<sup>14</sup>, have fans 'claiming' a story they desire to illustrate or imagine a soundtrack for. These soundtracks are called 'fan mixes'. Of course, it is not a soundtrack composed materially by the fans themselves, it is a selection of their favorite songs (from ten up to twenty, usually) which they feel fit the narration. Musical scores, nowadays, are essential to movies. Reading, on the contrary, is seen mostly as a silent activity. However, it is not that unusual to read

---

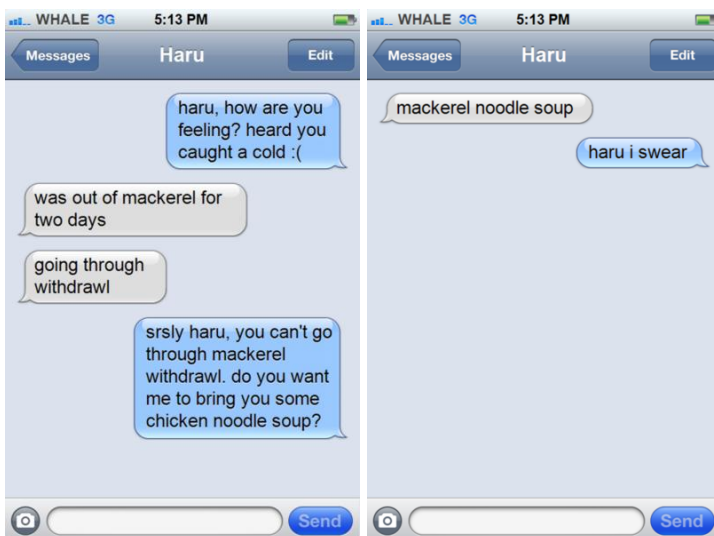
<sup>14</sup> Where authors are required to send in stories of at least 10,000 words. See <http://bigbangitalia.livejournal.com> for reference.

fan fictions while listening to music. Whilst choosing the songs for a fan mix, then, listeners read the story and picture it in their mind. If it were a movie, which song would they put in that particular scene?

Illustrations, instead, are called “fan arts”. There are fan fic writers who are also talented artists and include drawings in their own story. Otherwise, they are drawn by readers. It is an extraordinary token of appreciation, that demonstrates that someone’s narrative was powerful enough to inspire figurative art. A kind of art that includes graphics too, made mainly with Photoshop. Photos an artist works on might be screen captures from TV shows and movies watched on one’s computer/laptop, or material that they looked for on Google Images. Graphics for stories set in *Harry Potter*’s Marauder Era (when his parents were attending Hogwarts) cannot count on movies adaptations, so artists use photos of actors or models that fit the description made by J.K. Rowling.

Aside from accompanying the narration<sup>15</sup>, graphics might also be used as a means to tell the story or part of it. The texture of old paper can be recreated, as well as the visual of handwriting in ink. Epistolary stories, therefore, could be told using graphics of handwritten letters or handwritten postcards (that weren’t handwritten at all, but composed on Photoshop using a font that resembles handwriting).<sup>16</sup>

Same goes for short messages and chats on mobiles:



*Figure 8. Texts exchanged between Makoto and Haruka (two characters from the Japanese anime “Free! Iwatobi Swim Club”*

<sup>15</sup> See *The Shoebox Project* (<http://shoebox.lomara.org/>) of multimedia accompanying a story.

<sup>16</sup> For an example of a story that uses only graphics as a means of narration: *Needs More Sparkly Pens* (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/462385>) by mm\_coconut

As seen in Figure 8, indeed, it is quite simple to recreate an iPhone conversation using a graphic editing software.

Through fan fictions, then, one might learn how to integrate not only the language of the sources (intertextuality) but too include others media too.

## CHAPTER 3 – THE STUDY

### 3.1. Research hypothesis and research questions

This study is based the following research hypothesis: “Reading and/or writing fan fiction in EFL helps language learning and fosters a positive attitude towards the language itself.”

Since most of the literature on fan fictions either studies them as a cultural phenomenon (see Jenkins, 1996; Parrish, 2007; Thomas, 2006) or as a support for improving English as L1 (Penzato, 2012) and barely mentions ESL and EFL, this research is based on the replies to an open-form questionnaire. Like the hypothesis, however, the questionnaire questions are based on the writer’s personal experience as an ELL who both writes and reads stories in EFL.

With the aim of looking thoroughly into the aforementioned hypothesis, three research questions were devised:

1) *Può la lettura e/o la scrittura di fan fiction in LS influire sulla motivazione per lo studio di essa?*

It is assumed that reading and/or writing fan fictions in EFL can influence LL motivation, whereby “motivation” it is meant both the drive to start learning a new language and the determination to keep improving even at intermediate and advanced levels.

2) *Come influisce l’ansia sulla scrittura in lingua straniera, in particolar modo su quella delle fan fiction in inglese?*

This question theorizes that anxiety does relate to writing (a form of anxiety called "writing apprehension"), especially to writing in EFL, as opposed to Horwitz et. Al’s(1991) hypothesis that see FLA tied mostly with speaking.

3) *Può essere la lettura e la scrittura di fan fiction utilizzata per sviluppare e consolidare abilità ricettive e produttive in ambiti scolastici e non?<sup>17</sup>*

This question supposes that reading and/or reading fan fictions in English can help develop and improve the receptive and productive skills, either in a formal or informal environment.

---

<sup>17</sup> 1) Can reading and/or writing fan fictions in EFL influence LL motivation?

2) How does anxiety relate to writing in a FL, in particular to writing fan fictions in EFL?

3) Can reading and writing fan fiction activities be designed to develop and improve receptive and productive skills, either in formal or informal LL? (the research questions were formulated in Italian, the writer’s L1, since the research itself was conducted in Italian)

### *3.2. Subjects of the study*

The subjects of this study are 35 people, 33 women and 2 men. The age range goes from 17 to 35. More in particular, there are 23 people in “19-25” age group, 9 who are “over 25” and 2 who are between respectively 17 and 18.

Except for a seventeen year girl, who is Russian, the respondents come from all over Italy.

They all studied EFL – or are still studying, as in the case of the 2 girls under 19 and a couple of people within the “19-26” and “over 25” age groups –but for 33 of them Italian is L1, while for one girl Italian is L2 (L1 is Romanian). 23 have followed EFL courses for 10-15 years, 3 for more than 15 years and 10 for about 5-9 years. Nearly all associate ‘study’ with ‘formal education’ in school and consider to have reached the B2 level, the level students should attain at the end of high school. 7 out of the 35 claim they do not know any other FLs beside English, while the other 26 have studied either French, German or Spanish. 2 decided not to answer, Of those 33 who answered, though, 14 would be willing to try writing in one of the abovementioned languages (also amongst those 7 who declare English is the only FL they know). 4 of them, actually, have already written in other FLs (two in French, two in Spanish). As for the rest (19 people), nobody feels confident and/or proficient enough to even think about writing.

2 of the respondents have never written a fan fiction, neither in Italian nor English; 7 only write in Italian and the remaining 26 either write straight into English or they translate their works from Italian (2 of them, though, do not feel confident enough to share their work in EFL on the Internet). All subjects of the study were contacted on the Internet: through Facebook, Tumblr, online message boards or e-mails (further details about this matter will be given in the following section)

### *3.3. Multiple-case research*

The research presented here falls under the qualitative type of research, due to the limited number of subjects involved that makes any kind of generalization impossible. Nonetheless, it certainly provides an interesting starting point for further statistical studies. Moreover, according to the terms most associated with qualitative research (see Reichardt and Cook 1979; cited in Nunan, 1992: 5) it is: descriptive and inductive and assumes that the reality analyzed is dynamic and variable. However, it does not belong to what Grotjahn (1987) labels as the “exploratory-interpretative” paradigm: its purpose is not exploratory (to observe phenomena and draw theories and conclusions from the events witnessed) but confirmatory (looking for evidence that either confirms or confutes

the researcher's hypothesis). Still, it shares the other features of the "exploratory-interpretative" paradigm: it resorts to a non-experimental method and collects qualitative data, which will be subsequently interpreted. In other words, no artificial situation has been created – thus the approach can be seen as "naturalistic" – but subjects have been asked to reflect upon their current or previous learning experiences.

It is an evaluative multiple-case study (see Swanborn, 2010), and not a ethnography, because there has not been a direct observation of learners' behavior and its scope is much more limited (see Nunan, 1992: 75) It involves, instead, a group of cases (in this instance, 35) that are, as claimed by Stenhouse (1983), "studied at such depth as the evaluation of policy or practice will allow".

Case studies whose value is instrumental (see Richards, 2003: 21), since they have been chosen to focus on a broader issue. Adelman et. al. (1976) advocate the usefulness of case-studies in language research by suggesting that they provide a multiplicity of viewpoints – which can be the starting points, the databases, for future researchers – and insights that can be put to immediate use for several purposes.

In addition, this research is orientated toward the approach that Swanborn (2010) defines as *intensive*: it focuses on a small group of people and on specific instances of the phenomenon it wishes to study (writing in EFL at home vs. writing in EFL at school) but it does not fall entirely under this approach because the phenomenon has not been followed over time observing a specific variable.

### 3.4. Data collection procedures

As mentioned previously, data were collected on the Internet. First a preliminary questionnaire was set up, to ascertain the amount of people who would be willing to help the investigation on the matter by sharing their personal experience. I was also interested in observing the age range and educational background of my potential subjects. On November the 22<sup>nd</sup>, therefore, said questionnaire was posted up on a Tumblr<sup>18</sup>, on a specifically designed Facebook group<sup>19</sup> and on EFP's message board<sup>20</sup>.

From the end of November 2012 to February the 18<sup>th</sup> twenty-five replies were collected, all coming from women between 14 and 34 years of age who were attending or have attended college. It was

---

<sup>18</sup> <http://eflwriters.tumblr.com/>

<sup>19</sup> Scrittori & Lettori di fanfic in inglese / Writers of fanfics in EFL <https://www.facebook.com/groups/414723931931962/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://freeforumzone.leonardo.it/d/10508830/Tesi-sulle-fanfiction-in-lingua-inglese-ho-bisogno-del-vostro-aiuto-/discussione.aspx>

clear that my initial focus, which was supposed to be towards students in compulsory school had to be shifted towards young adults and adults learners.

From February the 19<sup>th</sup>, instead, an open-form questionnaire of 39 questions was shared on the abovementioned social networks and message board. Moreover, an e-mail box<sup>21</sup> was set up so that subjects could reply to my academic e-mail address without sharing their own. This of course, made it difficult to contact the same people for clarifications. However, it was a necessary procedure on the Internet, where people are wary of being too easily reachable. This phase lasted until July the 9<sup>th</sup>, when I received the 35<sup>th</sup> reply.

### *3.4.1. The preliminary questionnaire*

The preliminary questionnaire I designed was divided into two: one for the readers of fan fiction and the other for the writers of fan fiction. There are 11 open questions for writers and 7 open questions for readers of fan fiction in EFL. It was created in Italian and translated into English, so that whoever was writing in EFL could reply if they wished to. Its aim was not merely to ascertain that there would be people willing to collaborate to my research, but also to investigate whether or not I was biased by my involvement in the fandom and as an anxious individual in seeing a potential connection between writing fan fictions, motivation and writing apprehension. Questions 1, 2 and 3 are personal data and are the same for each questionnaire: first name, age, and education in regards to English LL.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 in the writers' part of the questionnaire concern specifically fan fiction, asking them if they ever wrote one in English (question 4). As many fan fiction writers work with material that has not been translated (dubbing or subtitling, depending from their home country) in their L1 yet, I then wondered if they felt more comfortable writing in EFL – which makes it easier to stick to the character voices' – or in their mothertongue (question 5). Then, a question (question 6) to discover if there might be other reasons to prefer EFL to L1, and the motivations for the opposite choice.

Question 7 investigates anxiety, in the sense that it serves the purpose of knowing if writing apprehension is something that EFL fan fiction writers – at least some of them – actually experienced. Question 8 and 9 aim to determine the existence of a link between external feedback (positive or negative) and the presence/lack of writing apprehension.

Question 10, instead, is set to find out a connection between the abovementioned feedback and LL

---

<sup>21</sup> replyforthesis@yahoo.com



motivation. This question caused some problems, as “motivation” was understood to be “the reason to **start** studying English” – which, of course, it is hardly the case for anyone: many first came into contact with the language in elementary or middle school because it was a compulsory subject – and not “a driving force which sustained your study and improvement of the language”. However, this misunderstanding was helpful to make me realize I had to reformulate the question regarding motivation. In conclusion to the writers’ questionnaire, there is question 11 that tries to establish whether the academic results were influenced by fanfic writing or not.

As for the readers’ questionnaire, as stated above question 1-2-3 are the same. Then, question 4 goes straight to investigate the *language level* demanding to know if receptive (reading) and productive (speaking) skills have been improved by reading fan fictions. Question 5 is about motivation and it is the same as question 8 of the writers’ questionnaire, and therefore was subject to the same misunderstanding. Question 6 is the same as question 11 discussed above and the last one (q. 7) deals with writing apprehension, as it asks what is refraining them from writing.

#### 3.4.2. *The open form questionnaire*

The open form questionnaire, whose replies will be analyzed in Chapter 5, is made up of the same 39 open questions for each subject. It is anonymous and it does not explicitly ask if the respondents is either male or female, though that is gathered from the gender throughout the questionnaire itself. Except for one<sup>22</sup>, all filled out questionnaires were in Italian.

To make sure that the questions would be helpful to reply to the research questions, they were divided in four parts:

a) part 1 includes personal data (q 1: age; q 2: education concerning English), investigation on how they came across fan fictions (q.3) and questions to identify oneself either as a writer or as reader of fan fictions (q. 4-5). As previously mentioned, though, all writers are also readers.

b) part 2 is addressed only to writers and it concerns motivation; while q. 6,7 and 8 scrutinize it more in general, the following questions explore the *learner level* in terms of accomplishments (q. 9,10), self-determination (q.11) and feeling of self-efficacy (q.12). This part aims to reply the first research question<sup>23</sup>.

c) part 3 is, again, directed mainly to writers even though one question in particular (q.21) is to be

---

<sup>22</sup> The Russian girl had the same questions in her questionnaire, but translated in English. Therefore she also replied in English.

<sup>23</sup> Can reading and/or writing fan fictions influence motivation in regards to EFL learning?

answered by those who only read fan fiction in EFL. It is subdivided in two parts: one that examines writing apprehension in relation to fan fic writing (q.13 to 21) and the other that inspects it referring to the subjects' scholastic background (q. 22 to 25). Questions 22 and 23 focus on the *learner level*, whilst questions 23 to 25 on the *learning situation level*. Part 3, hence, aims to reply the second research question<sup>24</sup>.

d) part 4, the one that researches into communicative competence, is subdivided into three subparts: the first investigates the educational background with respect to the writing skill (q., the second observe how fan fic might influence the improvement reading skill (q. 28 to 32) and the third deals with how fan fictions affect the writing skill. Therefore it refers to fan fic writing strategies (q.33 to 36), socio-linguistic accuracy (q. 37) and thoughts on future plans for writing in other FLs (q. 38). The last question (q.39) asks if the subject could see fan fictions as a resource for education. Part 4, then, aims to reply the third research question<sup>25</sup>.

### 3.5. Method of data analysis

The data I gathered are going to be investigated using mainly a qualitative methodology, that is to say content analysis. As Richards reminds us, through a qualitative analysis:

“we can often do this without worrying too much about precise figures, although more general representations in terms of ‘many’ or ‘the majority’ might well be in our descriptions” (2003: 11)

However, he adds, it would be foolish not to take advantage of more precise quantification.

Therefore, I looked for patterns between the different replies to the same question. Then, such patterns were grouped together and given different labels through coding. Labels which constituted the premise for categories that, hopefully, are conceptually coherent, analytically useful, empirically relevant and practically applicable (Richards, 2003: 276).

The analysis, indeed, intends to observe from data whether or not replies show specific trends that can provide answers to the research questions. Consequently, not all 39 questions have been taken into consideration. Even though they were designed to answer the three research questions, it became clear from the replies given that some were more specific and suitable for said purpose. Table charts and bar charts will be used in order to better visualize the results for the readers.

---

<sup>24</sup> How does anxiety relate to writing in a FL, in particular to writing fan fictions in EFL?

<sup>25</sup> Can reading and/or writing serve as a mean to promote and improve both productive (writing) and receptive (reading) skills either in a formal or informal educational environment?

To identify specific questionnaires, in analysis and discussion of results, replies have been coded and assigned a number from 1 to 35.

## CHAPTER 4 – DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will be devoted to analysis of data. First from the preliminary questionnaire, and then from a selected number of question from the open form questionnaire.

### *4.1. Data from the preliminary questionnaire*

Data from the preliminary questionnaire showed that, out of 17 writers:

1) nearly the half (8) expressed a preference for writing in their L1 (3 prefer FL; 6 claim they have no particular preference);

2) the majority (10) stated they do not experience writing apprehension in regards to English.

Despite no one has received negative feedback, however, there are 7 people who do not feel entirely comfortable writing in English, mostly because they are afraid some nuances might get lost from L1 to FL.

3) 10, again, believe there is no correlation between fan fictions and motivation. However, most of said ten people justified their response by saying “I started studying English long before I knew what a fan fic was.”, which shows that the question was misinterpreted. Besides, 7 subjects actually have been motivated in their LL studying by fan fictions.

4) 8 suppose that writing fan fictions had a positive influence over their academic results.

Besides, out of the **12** subjects who replied to the readers’ questionnaire (4 of which have also replied to the writers’ one): 1) only 1, who came across fan fiction at University, had no benefit (especially in terms of widening the FL vocabulary) from reading fan fictions.

2) 8 state that reading fan fictions had quite an influence in their LL motivation.

This was enough for me to decide to proceed with a more insightful, open-form questionnaire.

### *4.2. Data from the open form questionnaire*

Not all of the 39 questions will be taken into consideration, but only those that we consider to be more relevant in helping to answer the research questions.

#### *4.2.1. Data concerning motivation*

The analysis will start from questions specifically about motivation (q.6,7,8,12). 6 people, who do

not write fan fiction in EFL but only read them, did not answer to this question.

Considering a sample of 29, then, the results were the following:

6. *“Perché hai deciso di scrivere in inglese?”*

| <b>PUBBLICO</b> | <b>COMODITÀ</b> | <b>AUTOAPP.</b> | <b>SFIDA</b> | <b>GUSTI</b> | <b>INTEGRAZ.</b> | <b>RICHIESTA</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| 16              | 4               | 9               | 3            | 4            | 2                | 2                |

Figure 9. Words or concepts used in the replies to “Why did you chose to write in English?”

“PUBBLICO” as a category, means that they have chosen EFL to have a bigger readership (more public, in other words). 6 people reported it as their only motivation, but for the other 10 it was coupled with something else (either the chance for autodidacticism, challenge or personal tastes)

“COMODITÀ” includes all those who mentioned preferring English because they are more accustomed to the terminology used in the original source, or because in English it might be easier to stay true to the characters’ voices. All those who write and/or read fan fiction in EFL also watch TV shows and movies in the original language. Some will watch also the dubbed version, but most of them will not. “GUSTI” (tastes), on the other hand, refers to subjects who find English more suitable to their synthetic writing style than Italian, or expressed liking English more than Italian. 2 also mentioned that English gives them the opportunity to be part of a community, to interact and integrate with the target audience of the source material (“INTEGRAZIONE”).

Others (2), were asked from people who tried to translate their works from Italian to English with Google Translator.

Lastly, 2 have mentioned “AUTOAPPRENDIMENTO” (self-learning) as their single reason for writing in English, whereas the remaining 7 mentioned it together with having more public. It is quite relevant to this research, however, that learning has been actually mentioned. It leads straight to the questionnaire’s following questions:

7. “Ha influenzato la tua motivazione a migliorare la conoscenza della lingua?”

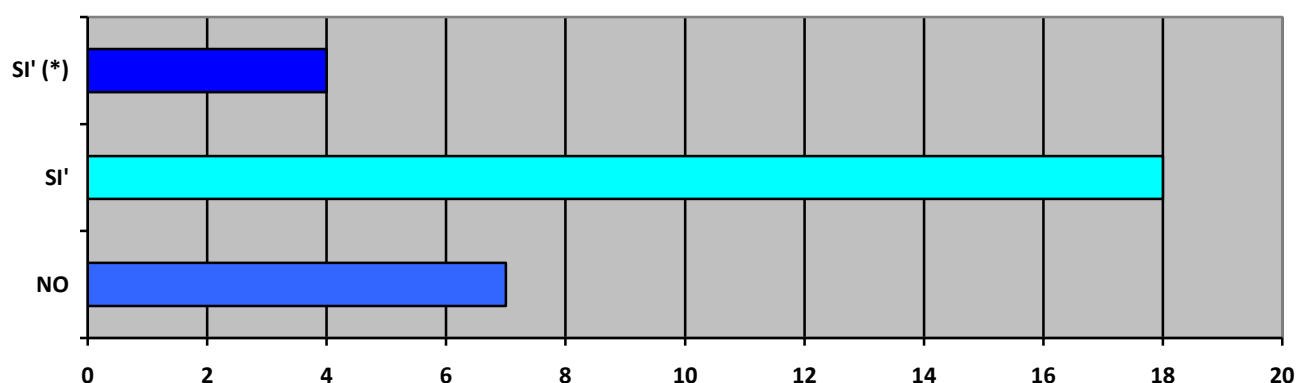


Figure 10. “Did it influence your motivation to improve your knowledge of the language?”

8. Se sì come?

| LACUNE | ESERCIZIO | SFIDA | ACCULTUR. | VOTI | DIVERTIMENTO |
|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|------|--------------|
| 14     | 2         | 2     | 2         | 1    | 2            |

Figure 11. “If it did, how?”

Of course, since question 8 is connected to question 7 they have to be analyzed together. First of all, since 7 subjects replied “NO” to q.7 – that is to say that writing fan fictions had no impact on their LL motivation – those who replied to question 8 were 22.

The answer “SI’(\*)” indicates those 4 people who had reservations, who replied with a “yes but...”: “yes, but I think my motivation was influenced more by reading than writing” (2) or “yes, but it was rather my motivation to improve in the first place that led me to write and read in EFL” (2).

The remaining 18 persons gave different explanations for the way that their motivation has been affected. 14 of them think it is a valuable instrument to determine their English fluency and which gaps they should fill (mostly lexis and/or grammar) by either asking for a L1 beta-reader or by reading more fan fictions. 2 use fan fiction writing as a chance to practice what they have learned in decades (or nearly) at school, testing what actually is stored in their long-term memory.

For 2 of them, in addition, it is a challenge and the fact that it is more difficult than writing in their L1 is what makes it worth trying, thus improving their knowledge of the language every time they overcome an obstacle. Another 2, instead, mentioned that fan fiction (both reading and writing) is a

way for them to get closer to the culture of the source material (usually either American or British), resulting in input for their *integrative* motivation.

While writing fan fiction is an activity done merely for pleasure, and writing in English was not imposed on any of the respondents, only 2 said that their motivation was affected by the fact that fan fiction writing is so much fun.

The last question of this section deals with the *self-efficacy* (see Chapter 1) theory, asking subjects whether or not they see themselves as good writers (being therefore motivated to write in EFL):

12. *Ti vedi come un buon scrittore o una buona scrittrice?*

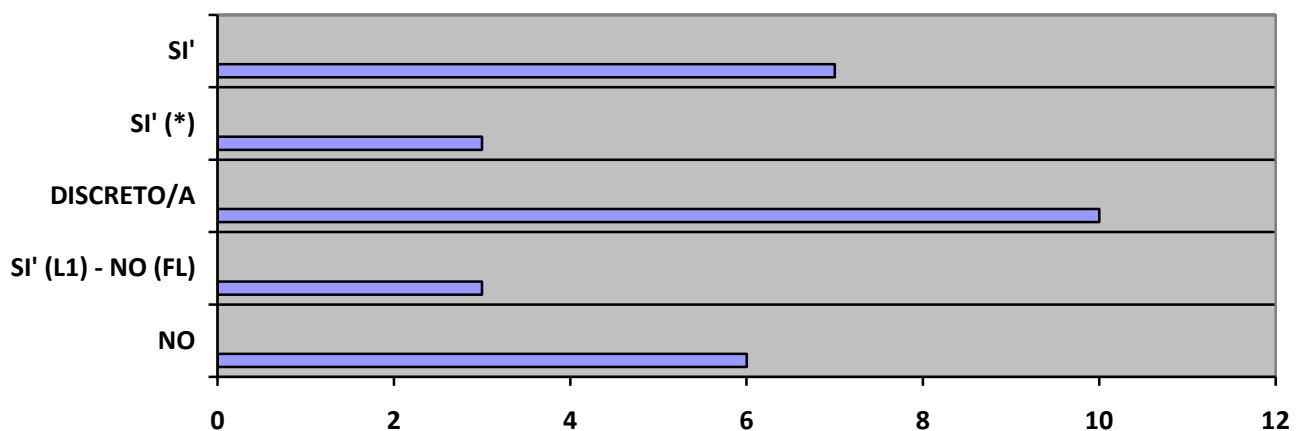


Figure 12 “Do you think you are a good writer?”

The majority of the respondents have quite a good opinion about themselves as EFL writers: 7 who are sure to be good writers (because they appreciate what they write), 3 who assume they are good because they have received only positive feedback and 10 that presume they are “not that bad”.

3 do not think their potential is expressed through English and state that, while they are good writers in their L1 they are poor writers in English.

6 think that, regardless of the language, they are not skillful writers. Still, the motivations mentioned in Figure 9 (showing them their strengths and weaknesses, being a challenge, bringing them closer to the FL culture) are clearly strong enough to keep them from giving up writing and facing the outside world’s judgment by publishing.

#### 4.2.2. Data concerning anxiety

##### a) Fan fiction writing apprehension

Could it be that, amongst those who do not possess a high level of self-efficacy, some of the subjects are influenced by writing apprehension while performing and when reviewing their final products? This question can be answered by analyzing the data gathered from question 15, 16 and 17. Questions 13 and 14, instead, aim to ascertain if there is a preference between L1 and FL and why; mainly to exclude that anxiety could be provoked by the act of writing per se (regardless of the language one is writing in) instead of writing in EFL.

Unlike the questions concerning motivation, respondents who write fan fictions in Italian but not in EFL have given their contribution too. The sample, therefore, is of 33 instead of 29:

##### 13. *Preferisci scrivere nella tua lingua madre o in inglese?*

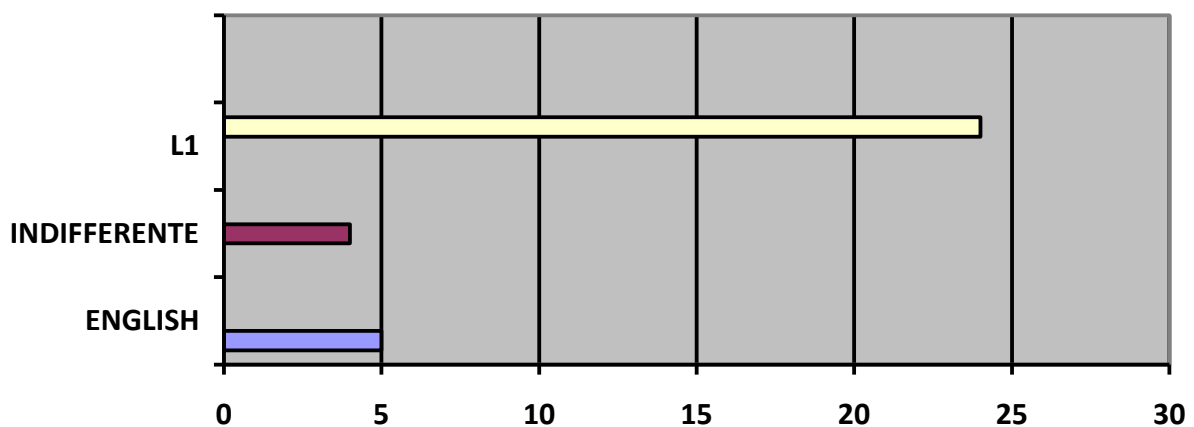


Figure 13 "Do you prefer to write in your L1 or in English?" (sample: 33)

##### 14. *Perché?*

| PADRONANZA | COMODITÀ | FACILITÀ | CONVENIENZA | PAURA | GUSTI |
|------------|----------|----------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 11         | 13       | 1        | 4           | 5     | 4     |

Figure 14. "Why?"

"INDIFFERENTE", in Figure 13, accounts for people who have no distinct preference: sometimes they feel like writing in their L1 and some other times in English; those whose choice is dictated by



the language of the original material. It can be seen, clearly, that an overwhelming majority of the respondents prefers to write in their mothertongue. Still, for 4 people it depends on how the story was conceived in their minds (if they started thinking about it in English, then they would write in English) or on matters of personal taste.

Indeed, in Figure 14, it can be observed that 4 people justified their choice with explanations ranging from “My style is better expressed in Italian”, “The concepts are clearer in Italian (subject n°1) / The concepts are clearer in English (n°4)” to “Making them talk in my L1 seems silly to me, since I have never heard them/read them doing so.” Moreover, 11 of those 24 (see figure 13) who prefer writing in their L1 explain that despite being confident with their knowledge of English, they do not believe it can ever compare with the fluency they have in their own mothertongue. The most influential reason, however, seems to be “COMODITÁ” (convenience): 13 writers out of 33 either cite it along with “padronanza” or they report it as their main reason to prefer one language over the other. This category includes people who said that writing in L1 demands less effort and time than writing in English (9) or that, on the contrary, stated that writing in English is less time consuming and exhausting than writing in L1.

1 subject, the Russian girl, actually claims it is easier for her to write in English than in her L1. “CONVENIENZA” (benefit), instead, which was brought up – as a concept – by 4 people, accounts for the subjects who prefer writing in English (3) or have no preference (1). They choose English because they expect to have some substantial advantages from their choice: either in terms of more public and feedback (3) or because they feel it is more useful than writing in Italian (1). Furthermore, 5 of the subjects who have expressed a predilection for L1 mention “PAURA” as one (or the only) of their explanations. Fear of making too many mistakes (or any mistake at all: as seen in Chapter 2, perfectionism heavily influences writing apprehension), fear of not being understood, fear of not sounding as natural as a mothertongue speaker would. 2 see themselves as poor writers, one needs the validation of others to consider herself as good and the remaining 2 value their abilities (as EFL writers) with a “not that bad”.

Although it seems to affect a minimal part of the sample, this last category demonstrates that some writing apprehension does feature even in writing for fun. Therefore, let us move on q. 15 and 16 that address this issue more in detail:

### 15. Trovi ansiogeno scrivere in inglese?

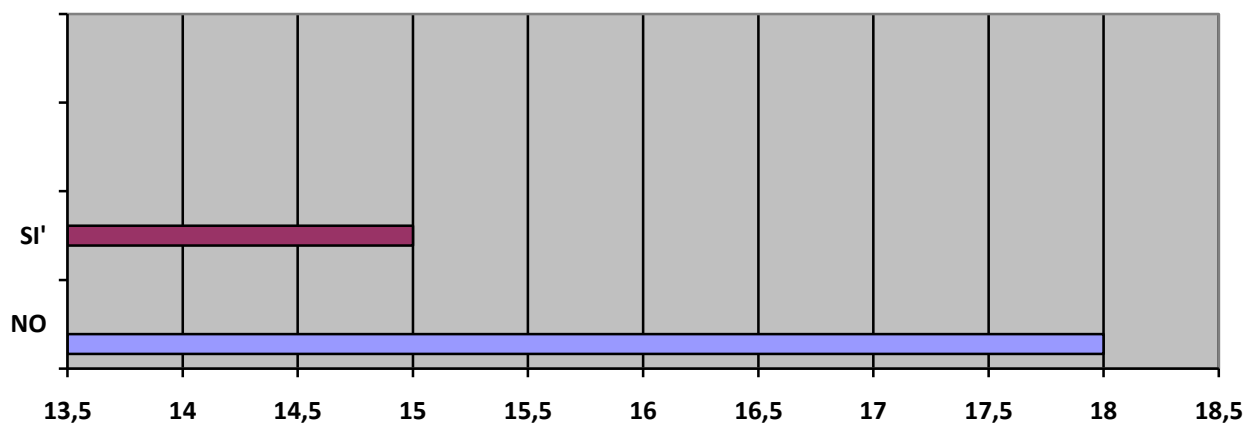


Figure 15. “Do you feel anxious about writing in English?”

Even though only 4 people claimed to prefer Italian due to writing apprehension, it can be seen here that nearly the half (15 out of 33) considers writing in English as an anxiety provoking activity. Anxiety that, of course, is less strong than their motivations for trying EFL writing (see Figure 9) – otherwise they would stop and stick to writing in their L1 – but that it is there nonetheless. Moreover, it was surprising to notice that 2 of the non-writers in EFL do not feel writing apprehension at all.

### 16. Perché?

| SCUOLA | LESSICO | ERRORI | STILE | SCORREVOLEZZA |
|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------------|
| 2      | 3       | 7      | 2     | 4             |

Figure 16. “Why?”

Again, the fear of making mistakes has a prominence as source of writing apprehension. Out of 15 subjects who said that they are feel anxious while writing in English, for 7 of them it is due mainly to the presumption of presenting to their public a perfect work or at least as perfect as possible. Indeed, amongst those who do not feel anxious at all, there were interesting insights about the fact that one does not have to be a mothertongue speaker to be a good writer, that even mothertongue speakers make silly mistakes (the most frequent is writing “your” instead of “you’re”) and the content matters much more than the form. For those who seek perfection, another source of anxiety is to find the “right” word, thus a limited lexis is felt as a massive obstacle in

expressing the characters' thought and feelings. Even when they manage to do that, 2 of the subjects are concerned with their writing style and the fact that they believe it is lost to readers when the story is in English. In addition, 4 of the anxious writers fear that the story lacks fluidity: when written in English it sounds off, unnatural. The narrations feel segmented. Furthermore, educational background still influences 2 subjects who are currently attending University: they feel as they were left to their own devices in middle school and never quite managed to catch up with everyone else. For both, the most difficult thing about writing in English (analyzed in Figure 17) is avoiding mistakes.

It has to be highlighted that, despite 16 people declaring not to be anxious about writing in English, 32 writers pointed out what makes it difficult for them to write in EFL. (only one, out of the 33 subjects who replied to the following question, answered “Nothing.”). Although a couple of questionnaires mentioned that writing is an inherently demanding activity – either in L1 or in English – each writer has, indeed, found something that makes it harder to write in EFL than in their L1. Therefore, it also includes those who prefer writing in English than in L1: the fact that it is harder makes it a much more useful and rewarding activity.

*17. Qual è l'aspetto più difficile dello scrivere in inglese, secondo te?*

| <b>CONFRONTO</b> | <b>ERRORI</b> | <b>PROFONDITÀ</b> | <b>STILE</b> |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 17               | 11            | 6                 | 7            |

*Figure 17. “What is the most difficult aspect of writing in English, in your opinion?”*

“CONFRONTO” (comparison) stands for the 17 people who compare themselves to mothertongue writers: they feel that they might not be natural enough, despite using flawless grammar or they worry over the lexical choices even though grammar and sentences structure is perfect. They feel slightly uneasy because they lack an innate knowledge of what is acceptable and what is not. Consequently, they either have to confide in a L1 English beta-reader or share their works regardless of their ‘inadequacies’. Most choose the latter option, deciding that in the end content matters more than form. 6 of the respondents, yet, are concerned about form on a deeper level. Those mentioned “PROFONDITÀ” (depth), not quite as a specific word but as a concept, is worried about being too superficial when expressing characters' thoughts and feelings. It is a matter that concerns both style, lexis and comparison. Comparison not only with a L1 writer, but also with

how clearly the concepts are delivered in the writer’s mothertongue. In fact, it mainly involves the subjects who decide to translate from L1 rather than writing straight into English.

“STILE” (style), on the other hand, is about two different conventions regarding good writing: simple does not equal simplistic, repetition is not frowned upon. Clearly, Italian is more prone to let the writers ramble without losing their readers in the middle of a very long period. The fact that one is repeating the same word for a purpose, to stress a particular concept, might be not perceived by L1 readers. Thus, the 7 people who wrote down matters concerning style are afraid that their personal style - more wordy and complex than its English equivalent – will be lost in EFL.

Again, it can be observed that “ERRORI” (avoiding mistakes) have been frequently mentioned – by one third of the subjects (11 out of 33) – because many wish to present to others a work that is as flawless as possible. It also has to do with the fact (mentioned in Chapter 2) that mistakes in writing are less tolerated than those made while speaking.

To conclude this part about fan fiction writing apprehension, the 6 people who have not dared trying to write in EFL have been asked why (q.21), since they seem to be the most affected by this kind of anxiety:

*21. Se non scrivi, che cosa ti blocca e t’impedisce di farlo?*

| <b>SCRITTURA</b> | <b>AUTOCRITICA</b> | <b>PENSIERO</b> | <b>VOGLIA</b> |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 2                | 2                  | 1               | 1             |

Figure 18. “If you do not write, what is blocking you from doing so?” (sample: 6)

The 2 subjects mentioned before, who do not feel anxious about writing in EFL and yet never attempted to write in any other language than their own L1, fall under two different categories: “PENSIERO” (thinking) and “VOGLIA” (will). The latter, who is the same – and only - subject who declared that writing in English is not difficult at all (q.17), is implying that he does not write in English simply because he has no desire to. The other, instead, states that since she has trouble thinking in English she always end up writing in Italian.

2 feel not motivated enough – thus they declined to answer the questions about motivation – by fan fiction writing in EFL to overcome the fear of inadequateness.

The remaining 2, who have never written a fanfic (neither in Italian nor in English) explained that they see fan fic writing as a taxing activity, regardless of the language involved.

b) *Writing apprehension in formal environments*

In Chapter 3 it has been claimed that feedback, when offered, is very often positive and encouraging despite the overall quality of the published work. Where does the heavy criticism come from, then? Is this fear of making mistakes so ingrained in writers because of school related experiences? An answer has been sought throughout the next set of questions (q.22 to q. 25). Since all of the respondents have studied English at school, the sample comprehends all 35 subjects:

22. *Hai mai trovato ansiogeno scrivere in lingua straniera, a scuola?*

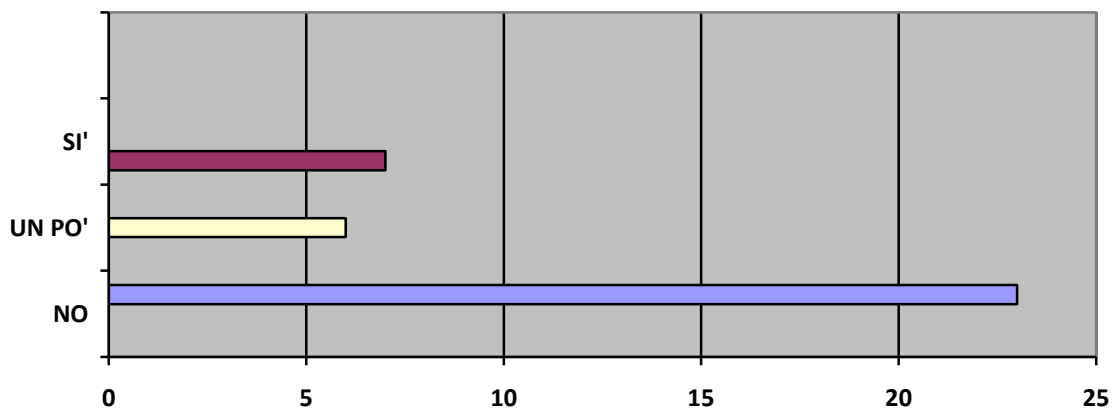


Figure 19. "Have you ever felt anxious about your writing performance in school?" (sample: 35)

Despite the abovementioned concerns, this graphic shows unequivocally that written production in a foreign language at school was source of anxiety for only 13 of the subjects. For 6 of them it was not constantly there, it depended on several factors which account for those who replied "SÌ" (the remaining 7) too.

23. *Se sì, perché?*

| ASPETTATIVE | VALUTAZIONE | TEMATICHE | PADRONANZA |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| 1           | 6           | 1         | 5          |

Figure 20. "If you did, why?" (sample: 13)

One subject reported that she has never felt anxiety during middle and high school writing, but she has started worrying over her academic papers because she cannot quite understand what are the teachers' expectations. Another one, instead, claimed she felt uneasy only when the topic had not

been talked about in class or was not relevant to her interests: she did not know what to write. 5 subjects feared they were not competent enough in the language (especially regarding the syntactic and semantic fields) to express their actual knowledge of the topic they were asked to write about. Out of the 7 apprehensive writers, who replied “yes” to q. 22, 4 stated that it was fear of evaluation rather than anxiety about writing in a FL.

So, it has been established that writing apprehension does not strictly relate to writing in school. However, it might be that it influenced the concern on form rather than content:

24. *Qual era la parte che aveva più peso nella valutazione dei tuoi scritti?*

| <b>FORMA</b> | <b>CONTENUTO</b> | <b>FORMA /<br/>CONTENUTO</b> | <b>FORMA /<br/>ORGANIZZ.</b> | <b>FORMA /<br/>CONTENUTO/<br/>ORGANIZZ.</b> | <b>NON<br/>RICORDO</b> |
|--------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 12           | 4                | 12                           | 2                            | 2   | 1                      |

Figure 21. “What was valued the most in your writing?” (sample: 33)

Unfortunately, 2 subjects misunderstood the question and said there were no expectations about their writing. Doubting that there was no criteria for evaluation, but refraining from second-guessing that it could have been form rather than content, said replies have been excluded from the sample above (figure 21). One does not recall.

Syntactical correctness, indeed, was highly valued in school. 12 respondents recall that it was actually valued much more than content, while for the other 12 they had nearly the same weight; some slip-ups in form could be overlooked if the content was good, but still it was valued slightly less than avoiding grammar mistakes.

Merely 2 of the subjects believe content mattered more to teachers than form. Moreover, being able to organize a text was recalled as a criteria for evaluation only by 4 of the respondents. For 2 it was judged together with form, for the other 2 together with form and content.

Such results might be interpreted as the reason why fan fiction writers are so concerned with form, despite being aware that content is equally – if not more - important in creative writing. Indeed, creativity does not seem to be valued much in compulsory schooling, for more than the half of interviewed subjects:

## 25. La creatività era giudicata come una componente importante?

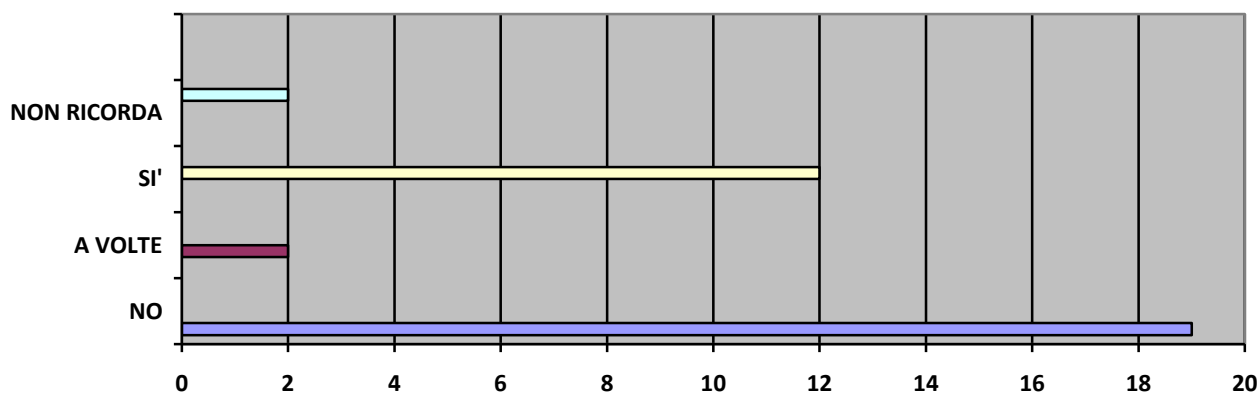


Figure 22. Was creativity valued an important component? (sample: 35)

Comparing this results with the ones presented in Figure 21, it might be gathered that the 12 subjects who replied “SÌ” (yes) here are the same who have answered that content was almost as important as form by their teachers. Surprisingly, though, 2 respondents who stated that *form* was valued the most in their writing have claimed that creativity was crucial too. As for the remaining 10, 7 have indeed replied “form and content”, 2 “content” and 1 “form, content and organization” in q. 24 (Figure 21). Regrettably, 2 subjects do not recall their writing experience at school.

“A VOLTE” (sometimes) includes the 2 respondents who answered that creativity was seen as a positive element only in narrative texts, while for other kinds of tasks (argumentative or expository essays, testing) it was not.

In addition, it should be pointed out that one of the “NOs” was justified by saying that she attended Ragioneria – a technical institute - so the kind of English studied was the micro language of economics (which, of course, has no place for creativity).

### 4.2.3. Data concerning competences: the educational background

Following from the previous section, only the background concerning the writing skill – referring in particular to creative writing - has been investigated through the following questions:

26. *Ti sarebbe piaciuto che ci fossero state più attività per allenarti alla scrittura creativa in inglese?*

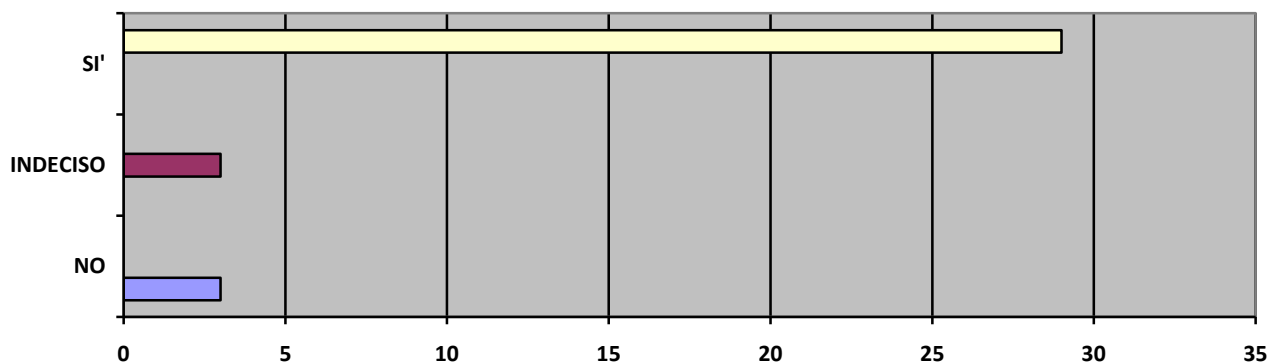


Figure 23. *“Do you wish you could have had more training at creative writing in English? (sample: 35)*

Notwithstanding the fact that 12 subjects declared that creativity was indeed a requirement of their English courses at school, it can be seen in Figure 23 that 29 would have liked to have more training in creative writing. One, indeed, recalls an activity where they were asked to retell events from *Oliver Twist* by using a different narrator - thus being forced to creatively justify his/her reasoning – as the only truly enjoyable writing she did in high school. Another laments that not ONLY English language classes lacked creative writing tasks, but Italian language classes too. These data suggest that creativity was valued even when the task did not strictly involve creative writing. 3 are unsure: they would love to attend creative writing courses now, but they feel that their English was too limited back then. Therefore, such an activity could be perceived as threatening, frustrating and anxiety provoking if forced upon students still struggling to reach a B1 level of proficiency. Due to fact that they either do not like creative writing in general (1) or perceive it as an activity that should be done in their free time, for entertainment purposes and not educational ones (2), 3 subjects replied that do not wish to have more training concerning this particular kind of writing, or any writing in general.



27. *A tuo parere, la scuola dedica abbastanza tempo ad allenare gli studenti alla scrittura in inglese?*

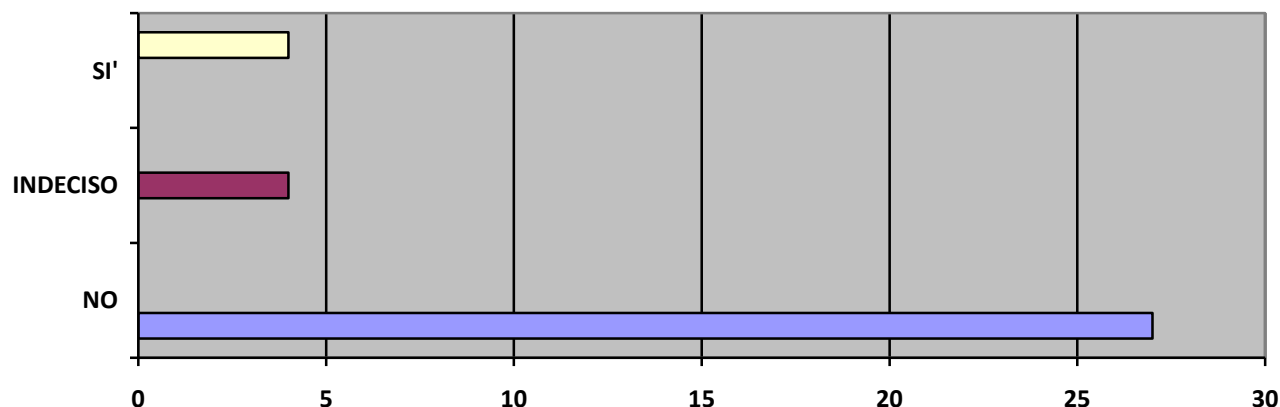


Figure 24. *In your opinion, does school devote enough time in training students to write in English?*

(sample: 35)

People who are hesitant (4), here, mostly state that “it depends on the kind of school”. Technical institutes have more training in commercial templates, while high schools focusing on humanities focus on literary texts analysis, summaries and essays (argumentative/explanatory about topics discussed in class or related to the latest news). Amongst the 28 subjects who replied “no”, subject n°17 remarks that school does not really teach students to write neither in English nor in Italian. On the other hand, n°15 (whose reply is amongst the 4 “yes”) argues that school devotes way too much time to written productive skills already, disregarding speaking and listening.

#### 4.2.4. *Data concerning competences: the reading skill*

While not every respondent might have written a fan fiction in EFL, they have all read at least one. Sometimes the choice of English over Italian/L1 is not really deliberate, though, but forced by the fact that nobody aside from English speaking authors has written fan fictions about that particular fandom one wants to read about. However, when both the Italian and the English fandoms offer an astonishing number of stories – as is the case with Harry Potter (see Chapter 3), one might wonder if EFL readers do have a preference concerning the language of the stories they read.

Question 28, therefore, aims to ascertain if said preference exist and what is the reason behind it, when it does. The questions right after 28, instead, focus more on the way reading fan fictions has influenced the acquisition of English (at home, as self-directed learning, or at school). While all 35 have replied to q. 28, 29, 30 and 32 the sample is smaller for 31 and 33 since such questions assume one has replied “yes” to q.30 and/or q.32.

28. *Preferisci leggere fanfic in inglese o in italiano?*

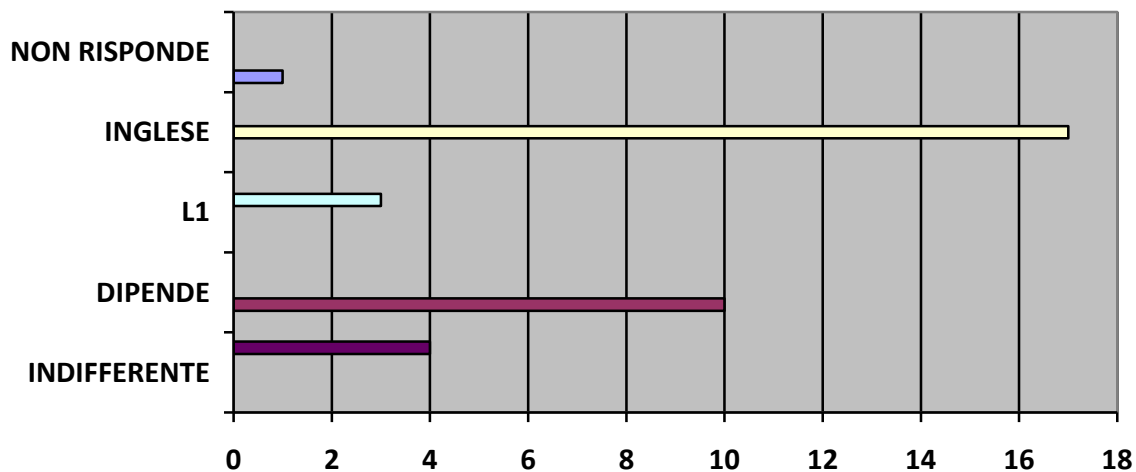


Figure 25. *Do you prefer to read fan fictions in English or in your L1? (sample: 35)*

Figure 25 shows that most subjects do have a preference concerning the language of the fan fictions they would like to read: English has been chosen by 17 of the respondents, without a second thought. For 10 subjects, however, the choice depends on several factors, a fact that will be furthered explored in the analysis of the next question. Only 4 people have claimed to be utterly indifferent to the language (English or L1) found in the stories they read and just 3 declared a penchant for Italian. 1 has not replied.

It can be speculated, then, that the reading activity does not provoke anxiety even when full comprehension is not obtained. The meaning of an obscure term is gathered from the context, when the reader assumes its understanding is crucial to the narration. Otherwise it might be ignored, or looked up on an online dictionary if one is interested in learning new vocabulary.

29. *Puoi motivare la tua scelta?*

| NON RISP. | COMODITÀ | OFFERTA | INTERESSE | QUALITÀ | ABITUDINE | ALTRO |
|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|-------|
| 4         | 3        | 14      | 2         | 11      | 4         | 4     |

Figure 26. *Can you motivate your choice? (sample: 35)*

The same 4 people who replied that there was no difference for them if the story they read is either in English or in Italian have not been able to motivate their lack of choice. As mentioned, the motivation that has registered the most in replies is related to the number of works offered for a

certain fandom (OFFERTA). Except for subject n°7, who used this term to justify his preference for Italian (together with the term “quality”), 13 of the respondents have stated that they have a definite (n° 19,21,22,23,28,29, 32, 33, 34) or slight (n°2, 6, 12, 27) partiality towards English because there is more to read.

Moreover a couple of subjects (n°12, 27, 28, 29, 32) have argued that the fact there is a higher quantity of stories in English also implies that there is a higher chance to find something well written. In other words, they assert that the quality of works in Italian tends to be lower than their English counterparts. Others subjects too have cited quality, either as the only reason to prefer English (n°10, 14, 17 and 31) or along with some other reason (n° 15: habit).

What is more, subjects n°14 and 15 claimed that they prefer English because they tolerate mistakes in a foreign language more than the ones they might find in a mothertongue fan fictions.

It mainly sparks from the assumption that whoever is writing in Italian is writing in their L1, and therefore cannot be excused for not revising their work in depth to get rid of orthographical and grammatical inaccuracies. No one seems to take into consideration that Italian can be the authors' L2.

Then we have people who prefer Italian when they are tired, because it is easier to read (n°5, 8, 31) and others who favor English because they are more accustomed to “hearing” the characters think and/or talk in said language (n°11, 15, 20 and 26). Differently, 2 respondents (n°9 and 35) stated that it depends on the plot of the story itself and if it is able to catch their interest (INTERESSE) regardless of the language.

As for the category “ALTRO” (other), it includes four different factors that have been cited only once: usefulness (n°2 slightly prefers English because it is more useful), challenge (for n°4 it is a challenge with herself to read and understand English), proficiency (n°18 wants to read in Italian because she has a higher proficiency in her L1) and concentration (n°24's first choice is English because she has to concentrate more when reading in a FL and therefore she skips less than she would in Italian).

Aside from being a source of entertainment, fan fictions in English appear to have been an asset for LL:

30. *Leggere fan fiction ha migliorato la tua conoscenza dell'inglese?*

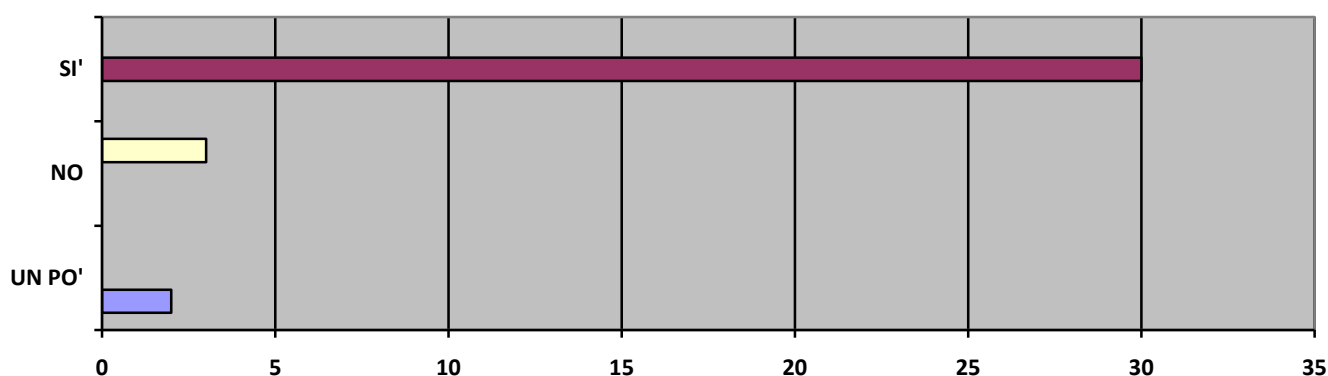


Figure 27. *Did reading fan fictions improve your knowledge of English?* (sample: 35)

Nearly all, in fact, affirm that reading fan fiction has improved somehow their knowledge of English. 3 subjects, however, assume the aforementioned activity has not helped them or influenced in any way their achievements in the FL. Either because they read very few stories in English (as the girl in questionnaire n°16) or because they started reading English fan fictions when they were already at an advanced level (as in questionnaires n°18 and 31). The remaining 2, instead, think that reading fan fictions has helped them at least a little (un po').

When asked how it affected their LL, the area that appears to be affected the most is lexis:

31. *Se sì, come?*

| LESSICO | MODI DI DIRE | PADRON. | FORME COLL. | REGISTRO | GRAMMATICA | ALTRO |
|---------|--------------|---------|-------------|----------|------------|-------|
| 18      | 7            | 7       | 5           | 2        | 2          | 5     |

Figure 28. *"If it did; how?"* (sample: 32)

The sample, here, is of 32 because – naturally - the 3 subjects who answered that reading fan fictions has not helped them at all have not been taken into consideration.

Lexis occurred 18 times, mostly – in 12 replies – along with another elements that were improved by reading (figures of speech, slang, register, grammar, etc.). Figures of speech, indeed, appear only once on their own: in the remaining 6 replies they are always coupled with newly acquired vocabulary (LESSICO). "PADRONANZA" (competence) accounts for the subjects who mentioned to have perfected many different aspects of language through reading: lexis, grammar, register,

colloquial speech, formal speech, figures of speech, pragmatics and so on. In other words, they believe they have enhanced their communicative competence in general. Since fan fictions are rarely written by people over 30, slang and figures of speech are very frequent. Besides, if the fandom involved is a medical drama or a procedural one, it is likely that they will become familiar with the medical and legislative jargon needed in the narration. 5 of the respondents stated that through fan fictions they encountered the “living language”, the one used every day in informal conversations (FORME COLLOQUIALI). For them it was a revelation: they learned terms and expressions that they would never have studied at school.

2 subjects find reading fan fiction useful to observe and internalize differences in register. While most of the stories are written using an informal tone, the most talented writers do shift from formal to informal register (or the opposite), as required by the context and by the level of education of the characters involved in the story. Moreover, according to 2 subjects the acquisition of grammar can be positively affected too. Finding the same structures over and over again, one is bound to remember them by redundancy. Of course, there is a risk: since many fan fictions lack proof-reading, one might come across grammatical errors without realizing it. However, if readers choose to go for stories that were checked by a beta-reader (see Chapter 3), the aforementioned risk does not exist.

The category “ALTRO” includes, again (as in figure 26), elements that have been cited only once. 4 were mentioned together with lexis (ability to think in English; punctuation; style; syntactical structure), 1 was on its own (comprehension).

Many discovered fan fiction when their formal learning was over, so despite the abovementioned data, the 35 respondents who replied to q. 32 were not so sure this activity has influenced their academic results:

32. *Ha influenzato i tuoi risultati scolastici?*

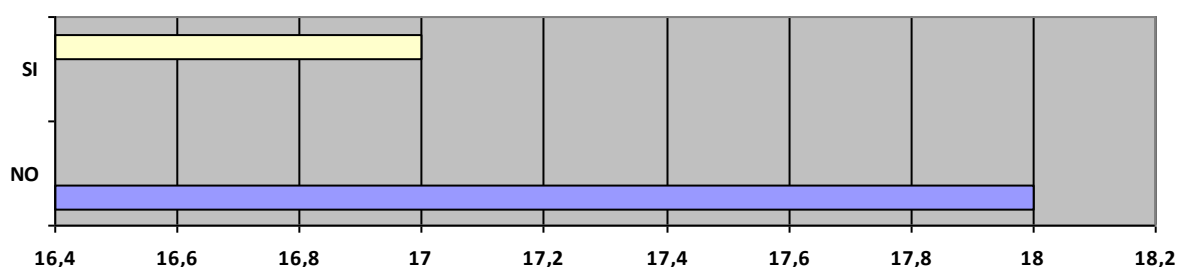


Figure 29. “Did it influence your academic results?” (sample: 35)

The difference between the respondents who presume reading fan fictions did influence their academic results and those who do not believe so is minimal. As can be seen in Figure 29, 17 have replied “yes” and 18 have answered “no”. Question 33, then, investigates to what extent do these 17 persons believe their formal LL has been supported by reading fanfictions:

33. *Se sì, come?*

|                   |                  |                   |                    |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>SCIOLTEZZA</b> | <b>VELOCITÀ</b>  | <b>LESSICO</b>    | <b>ESPRESSIONE</b> |
| 2                 | 5                | 2                 | 2                  |
| <b>CONOSCENZE</b> | <b>ESERCIZIO</b> | <b>PADRONANZA</b> | <b>ALTRO</b>       |
| 3                 | 2                | 2                 | 2                  |

Figure 30. “If it did; how?” (sample: 17)

As can be observed in the chart above, the factor that has been influenced the most and helped the subject in school is the time they take taking tests or completing task. Not having to check the dictionary so frequently as their own classmates, remembering figures of speech and expressions they can use for their papers, 5 respondents have noticed that their performing speed (VELOCITÀ) has increased a lot. Thus they have the chance to revise their work before handing it in to the teacher, and that resulted in higher grades in the English course. Speed is mentioned three times on its own (questionnaires n° 5, 17, 20) and twice along with another elements: proficiency (PADRONANZA, n°23) and fluency (SCIOLTEZZA, n°1). Fluency, in this case, stands for the ability to organize the text – making it ‘fluid’ – and getting rid of hesitations in reading, writing and speaking (questionnaire n°33).

In addition, 3 subjects have mentioned that reading fan fictions provided them with brand new information concerning several different fields (CONOSCENZE), giving them a starting point from which they could work. Not only in English classes, but also in other subjects, depending on the topics approached by the story. As in any other kind of authentic reading material, besides, fan fictions offer the opportunity of being exposed to the language that one is studying. Since English here is a FL and not a SL, exposure is very limited. Resources such as movies, TV shows, books and fan fictions in BrE or AmE allow students to have a chance for improvement outside of school

too. This has been taken into consideration only by 2 of the subjects (ESERCIZIO, reported in questionnaires n°26 and 32).

Similarly to Figure 28, “PADRONANZA” includes the 2 subjects who state that their scholastic results were influenced positively because, thanks to reading fan fictions, they have reached a higher proficiency in almost all skills (reading, writing, speaking).

“LESSICO” (lexis), instead, accounts for the 2 questionnaires that reported just an increase of the lexis at one’s disposal. “ESPRESSIONE” (cited in questionnaires n°6 and 11) , on the other hand, is concerned with the ability of delivering the message better – stylistically, mostly – at the sentence level.

To conclude, under the category “ALTRO” two other items have been listed: test (mentioned once, in questionnaire n°12) and distraction (questionnaire n°35). Indeed, the last respondent has experienced a negative influence on her learning from reading fan fictions, because she ended up wasting hours reading instead of studying. In questionnaire n°12, on the contrary, the subject states that reading fan fiction has helped her a lot, so much that “Ho trovato il test CILTA – B2 qualifying examination – elementare”.

#### *4.2.4. Data concerning competences: the writing skill*

It has been observed that most subjects do believe that fan fiction have helped them improve the reading skill, even though not everyone has experienced a positive influence academically.

To reply to the third research question, however, the writing skill has to be investigated too.

Therefore, subjects have been asked about their writing strategies (do they translate from Italian into English or was the text in English in their minds already?; do they plan what they are going to write?; etc.) and resources (online dictionaries, Google, websites about writing, etc.). Since the source material tends to be either British or American, it has also been asked if they take into account what variety of English should be used (most subjects have studied only BrE, but watch mainly TV shows and movies in AmE).

Results are going to show us whether or not they are aware of planning strategies such as brainstorming and flowcharts and if there is a conscious choice about the usage of BrE vs. AmE.

The sample of q. 34, 35 and 36 is going to be of 32 because the questions have not been answered by those who do not write fan fictions in English or at all.

34. Qual è il tuo approccio alla scrittura in inglese? Scrivi direttamente nella lingua straniera o traduci dall'italiano?

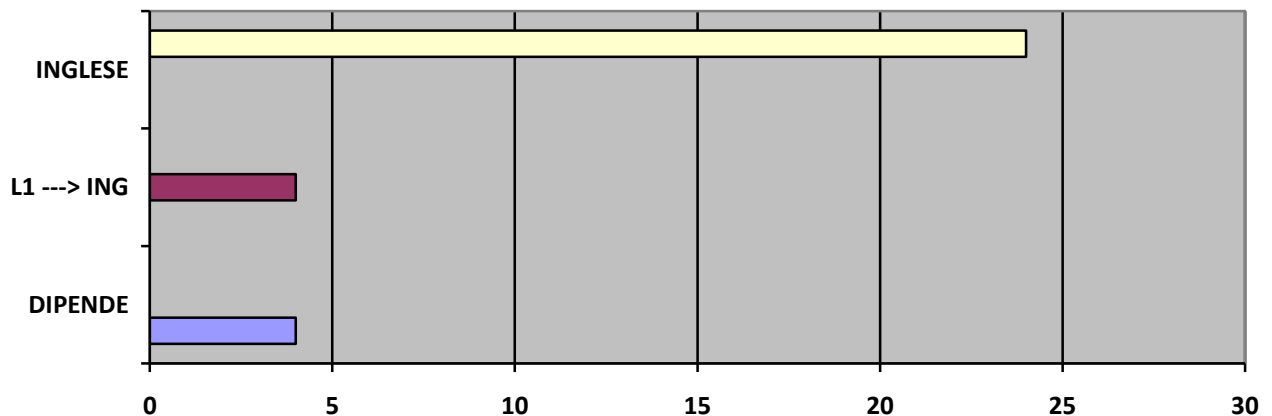


Figure 31. “What is your approach at writing in English? Do you write straight in the FL or do you translate from your mothertongue?” (sample: 32)

Answers presented in Figure 31 indicate that 24 subjects write directly in English, for several reasons: they consider it less wearying and quicker than translating from L1, they believe it diminishes the risk of having long and very complex sentences. Moreover, they all state that they think in English, so why should they add an unnecessary step by writing in Italian first?

On the contrary, 4 respondents assert ideas come to their mind in Italian, so they prefer to stick with said language and then translate the whole story into English. In questionnaire n°13, though, it is maintained that only a first draft is written in Italian.

However, there are also 4 subjects who sometimes write straight into English and other times translate from Italian. They affirm it depends on the idea itself too, which can pop up in their heads either in English or in Italian.

Translation, therefore, is a strategy chosen only by a minority of the respondents.

Concerning planning, instead:

35. Pianifichi ciò che scriverai?

| SEMPRE | NON SEMPRE | SOVENTE | A VOLTE | QUASI MAI | MAI |
|--------|------------|---------|---------|-----------|-----|
| 11     | 4          | 7       | 3       | 4         | 3   |

Figure 32 “Do you plan what you are going to write?” (sample: 32)



Three categories in Figure 32, that is to say “SEMPRE” (always), “NON SEMPRE” (not always) and “SOVENTE” (often) testify that 22 respondents do tend to plan – to some extent – their stories. Planning, however, rarely involves one-shots and it is felt as quite indispensable for multi-chaptered stories: authors outline the plot and list the events to recall what has happened before and what should happen next. Moreover, those who answered “SOVENTE” added that they write down a very generic draft that might change completely once they start composing the fan fic itself. The remaining 10 are subdivided in “A VOLTE” (sometimes; 3 subjects); “QUASI MAI” (almost never; 4) and “MAI” (never; 3), which indicate that fan fiction can be a speedwriting activity too, especially when it involves short stories.

It has to pointed out that one subject, in questionnaire n°12, said that she never plans when she writes for fun but she always does when she writes for school. Thus she has been put in the “SEMPRE” category.

As for strategies used in planning:

*36. Usi strategie come il brainstorming, scalette o schemi?*

| <b>NESSUNA STRATEGIA</b> | <b>TUTTE E 3 LE STRATEGIE</b> | <b>SCALETTA</b> | <b>BRAINSTROMING</b> | <b>SCHEMA</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 4                        | 5                             | 12              | 6                    | 2             |

Figure 33. “Do you use strategies such as brainstorming, outlines or flowcharts?” (sample 29)

Despite the exclusion 3 subjects who replied that they never plan what they are going to write, data in Figure 33 contradicts what has been stated by observing Figure 32. Even though 4 subjects claim to plan every once in a while, they answered that they not use any of the strategies listed above. It is likely that they simply write down a short list of the events for each chapter but they do not consider this a “strategy” and therefore have replied that they use none. This is, though, just an assumption, influenced by the fact that “SCALETTA” (outline) is an instrument for 17 of the respondents, either on in its own (10 questionnaires) or along with “BRAINSTORMING” (2 questionnaires).

1 of the respondents, however, admits that even though she uses them she ends up ignoring them every time and writing something completely different. Furthermore, 4 subjects state that they use brainstorming and outlines only under specific circumstances: for stories that are going to be

submitted for writing challenges (questionnaire n°7), for stories that are longer than 2,000 (questionnaire n°14) or 5,000 (questionnaire n°26) words and for multi-chaptered ones (questionnaire n°27).

Brainstorming, on the other hand, is used for one-shots too, since its function is to sort out ideas and see which ones inspire writers the most. Charts, instead, are rarely used. Only 2 respondents, indeed, have mentioned them.

Anyhow, there are multiple instruments that fan fic writers take advantage of while composing their stories:

37. *Con quali strumenti ti aiuti? (vocabolario / dizionario dei sinonimi e dei contrari, etc.)?*

| VOCABOLARIO | WR | UD | GOOGLE | AMICI | WIKIPEDIA | SIN.&CON. | ALTRO |
|-------------|----|----|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 12          | 18 | 7  | 6      | 3     | 3         | 8         | 5     |

Figure 34. “What are you main resources for writing? (dictionary / thesaurus, etc.)” (Sample: 29)

Comparing the results shown above with the data gathered from Figure 31 it can be hypothesized that the majority of fan fic writers does not stop thinking in Italian despite writing in English. Therefore, dictionaries are crucial for their work when they happen to be unsure of a term: they can write it down in Italian and then check on the dictionary for translation. 12 subjects do not specify if it is one on paper or online, whereas 18 specifically indicate WordReference<sup>26</sup> (WR) as their main source for translating words. Along with WR, 7 people also take advantage of another online dictionary: the Urban Dictionary<sup>27</sup> (UD). Opposed to WR, that lists words that have already been accepted as part of the English vocabulary – though ‘selfie’, one of the most recent additions to the Oxford Dictionary, has not been added yet - UD users add words and figures of speech that are currently used in informal conversations.

The category “GOOGLE” does not stand for Google Translator, which sadly is still an extremely unreliable resource, but as the search engine itself that is used as an online corpora. 6 subjects use it to check whether a figure of speech/expression/sentence structure that the EFL author has chosen is effectively used by mothertongue speakers. It is not utterly trustworthy, as a source, because

<sup>26</sup> <http://wordreference.com/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>

website themselves can be designed by EFL and ESL speakers. Consequently, 3 subjects rely on friends whose native language is English too.

Concerning synonyms and contraries, 8 respondents either use a paperback thesaurus or one online. Writing, sometimes, requires research on particular topics. In spite of the skepticism and mistrust scholars have towards Wikipedia, it is cited by 3 respondents as their main resource for fact-checking. 2 subjects, however, listed under “ALTRO”(other), prefer to browse printed encyclopedias. The remaining 3 under the abovementioned category use online dictionaries that are not WR (Reverso.net, that allows also to translate a whole text; The Free Dictionary), monolingual dictionaries (Oxford English Dictionary) or other resources. In particular, in questionnaire n°22 the subject mentions books, movies and other fan fictions in English.

One final question remains about their writing. Since many have only attended British English courses and have come across the American variety only when they started watching/reading the original version of their favorite TV shows/books, they might overlook the differences between the two languages:

*38. Ti preoccupi di rispecchiare le varietà dell'inglese (BrE vs AmE, per esempio), quando scrivi?*

| <b>SÍ</b> | <b>NON<br/>ABBASTANZA</b> | <b>NON ANCORA</b> | <b>NO<br/>(AmE &gt; BrE)</b> | <b>NO<br/>(BrE &gt; AmE)</b> | <b>NR</b> |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| 14        | 8                         | 2                 | 4                            | 3                            | 4         |

Figure 35. “Are the varieties of English a concern to you, while writing? (i.e. BrE vs AmE)” (Sample: 35)

As has been shown before, in Figure 9, there are 6 people who have never written anything in English. 2 of them, however, imagined how they would behave if they ever decided to give it a try, so the “NON RISPONDE” (no reply) does not include them. They have both stated that they would probably use prevalently American terms, even when writing about source materials coming from the Great Britain. They are not alone in this. In fact, there another 2 subjects who write in American English (AmE) regardless of the setting of the story. In questionnaire n°25, it is stated that she only writes in American but her main fandom is Harry Potter that takes place in the United Kingdom, with only British (BrE) speaking characters in it. On the other hand, those who are more familiar with BBC serials and the variety they have learned at school (3, in this case) tend to do the opposite and use British terms and spelling even in a fan fiction that should have characters talking in AmE.

A good number of the respondents, nevertheless, is actually concerned with using the proper variety. 14 people claim they always pay attention to the language they use. One goes as far to state that she also makes sure of choosing the right regional (Geordie vs. Mancunian dialect, for example) variety when using BrE.

8 state that they do try to avoid weird mixes of AmE and BrE but sometimes they fail. Usually readers do not mind these kinds of mistakes, especially coming from EFL writers, but it does become an issue when the source material plays on the fact that one character is American and the other is British.

The “NON ANCORA” (not yet) tag accounts for the 2 subjects who do not pay attention to the variety they use yet, but they plan to do so in the near future.

#### 4.3. Fan fictions in formal and informal language learning environments

Despite what has been stated above, can fan fictions really be used in formal and informal LL settings? The final question of the questionnaire asks subjects for an opinion about this matter:

40. *A tuo parere, si potrebbero usare le fan fiction come strumento per promuovere lo sviluppo della competenza ricettiva e produttiva scritta? (ad esempio attraverso un laboratorio di scrittura creativa)*

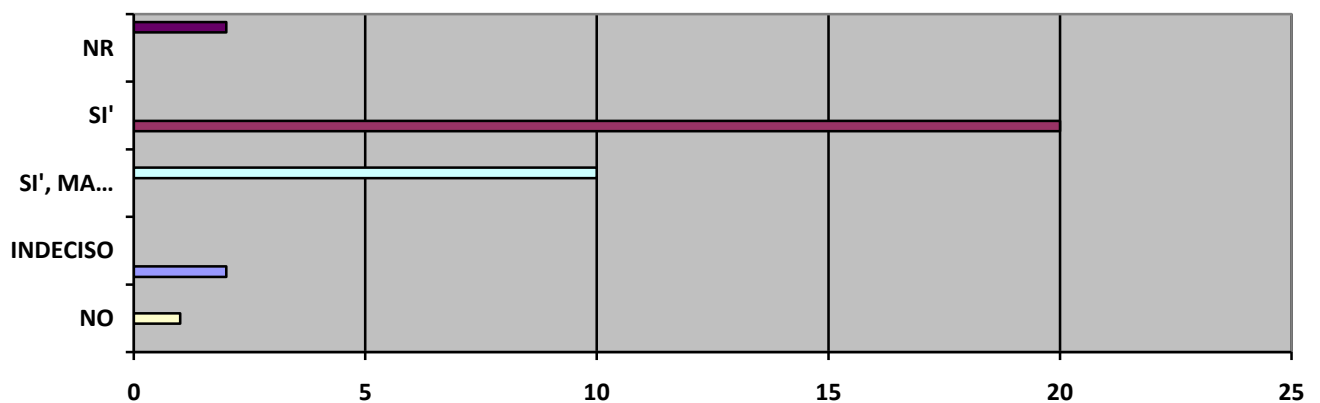


Figure 36. “In your opinion, can fanfic fictions be used as resource to promote the development and improvement of reading and writing skills? (i.e. through an extracurricular course of creative writing in English)” (Sample: 35)

Notwithstanding the fact that 6 respondents do not write in English, and 2 of them do not write fan fictions at all, only 1 has given a downright negative response about taking fan fictions to the classroom in informal environments. 2 are unsure whether to say yes or no: while they have seen that fan fictions help improving reading and writing skills they are not sure that it can be an interesting activity for all of the students. Moreover, some of them might not be comfortable

sharing what they write with an authoritative figure, even when their compositions are not going to be graded.

10 did not express an outright positive opinion to the idea: they are not against it, if certain requirements are fulfilled. 2 of them, indeed, stated: “Yes, but it has to be carefully planned so that students know what are they going to gain from attending such writing courses.” Another 2 were concerned with the content of fan fictions, which tend to aimed at mature readers: “Yes, but the teacher has to make a selection of the appropriate and more useful material, because the Internet is full of smut – stories involving mainly sexual intercourses – and badly written fan fictions.”

As for the other 6:

- a) it could be uncomfortable for introvert people (1)
- b) writing original pieces, rather than fan fictions, would be helpful to English language learners (1)
- c) it probably will not welcomed in the Italian schools (1)
- d) it is quite unlikely that students are willing to work more than requested by their curricular courses (therefore it would work if it was an activity done during school hours) (1)
- e) it would work if paired up with a reading workshop, so that stories can be based upon literary works (1)
- f) only if the prejudices about fan fictions as silly entertainment for people who have way too much spare time on their hands is overcome (1).

On the other hand, 24 of the people consulted were unreservedly in favor of having either fan fictions in class – to disrupt the monotony of the same old writing tasks – or as an extracurricular activity. Indeed, questionnaires n°7 and n°35 report two contrasting opinions about the setting of tasks concerning fan fictions. Questionnaire n° 7 states that it should take place in an extracurricular course and should be aimed to students attending at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of high school – otherwise they are not proficient enough – while questionnaire n°35 argues that it can only work if done in class, during the curricular English course. Moreover, 2 subjects mention pleasure as a very powerful motivator (see Chapter 1) that enhances language learning, and another 2 believe fan fiction is more relevant to the learners’ interests than writing about themselves or their classmates. In fact, as respondent n°4 has stated “Everyone is a fan of something.”. Indeed, it should be kept in mind that fan fiction can be about real people too (RPF), so students could write stories about celebrities or footballers.

While questionnaire n°21 observes that writing fan fictions can help developing creativity too, n°24 argues that creativity is not indispensable: one can choose to work with the canon (see Chapter 3) given by the writers of the source material and renounce to create anything from scratch.

Furthermore, respondent n°29 suggest linking it to movies and literature – so that it can be used to learn English literature too – and n°13 admits she has written drabbles for the Cambridge First Certificate of English examination.

## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As stated in Chapter 3, in order to confirm or negate the research hypothesis (reading and/or writing fan fiction in EFL helps language learning and fosters a positive attitude towards the language itself), three research questions have been designed. Discussion of results will show how data presented in Chapter 4 answer to said questions as well as implications about motivation, written apprehension and receptive and productive written skills.

### *5.1. Implications about motivation*

In order to answer the first research question - “Può la lettura e/o la scrittura di fan fiction in LS influire sulla motivazione per lo studio di essa?” (Can reading and/or writing fan fictions in EFL influence LL motivation?) - data regarding motivation (replies to questions 6, 7, 8 and 12) have been gathered and analyzed.

Results from a question that asked explicitly if reading and/or writing fan fictions influenced one’s motivation to improve one’s knowledge of the language, shows that most of the subjects do believe such activities positively affect their attitude towards language learning. Moreover, since just a few of the respondents are still studying English at school – 2 are in high school and 2 are attending University and English is their major – it can be observed that most of said language learning happens in an informal environment.

Similarly to the studies by Clément and Kruidenier (1983, cited in Dörnyei 2009: 2, 24) we did not find considerable evidence proving that learners are indeed influenced by an integrative motivation. In other words, the purpose of our subjects rarely is to “come closer to the other language community” (Gardner; 2001: 5). In fact, even though the benefit of having a wider readership is not as clearly perceivable as course credits or a job advancement (Noels et. Al; 2000: 36) would, data confirm that the instrumental orientation to motivation definitely prevails. Actually, only 2 subjects mention that they choose to write in English because they want to be part of the English speaking fandoms.

Furthermore, the second most cited reason to write in English is the opportunity for self-learning. Such a result, in my opinion, suggests that some writers do behave as described in Titone’s (1985; 1999) ego-dynamic model. According to him, acquisition is a dynamic process governed by the “ego” (hence the name ‘ego-dynamic’) that, based on the above-mentioned idea of oneself, elaborates a strategy to accomplish one’s goal (attend a language course, studying abroad for a couple of week, etc.).

After the tactical stage, in which the individuals put into effect their intentions by actually attending a course or going abroad, learners assess if said actions did help them to learn the language or not. If the results are close to what one expected, if they were achieved with a tolerable amount of effort and they are worth the time and money spent to achieve them, then they would reinforce the strategy. It will get a positive feedback from the “ego” and LL will continue being motivated. If, on the other hand, results are far from one’s aim then the feedback will be negative and Krashen’s affective filter (1982) will come into play, making language acquisition much more difficult. The “possible self” one had in mind will be forgotten and, in the long run, one might stop learning the L2/FL altogether. In the case of this study, learners have assessed that reading and/or writing fan fictions in EFL did help them to learn the language. Therefore, fan fictions keep their role as the main instrument through which learners improve their English proficiency.

The data that has been gathered, in addition, show that fan fictions motivate learners mostly by showing them the gap that is present between the readers and/or writers they would like to be and their actual proficiency in both receptive and productive written skills in EFL. Whereas Balboni (2008) and Caon (2006) state that pleasure is the most constant and productive motivator in language learning; results show the prevalence of *need* as a motivator. The need to increase exponentially the number of one’s readers, the need to widen one’s choice of possible reading materials, the need for achievement.

Indeed, it seems that many respondents take advantage of fan fictions to improve their mastery in EFL; in particular lexis through reading and grammar through writing. It can be affirmed, then, that reading and/or writing fan fictions are activities that show learners their “*ought-to selves*”. *Ought-to-self*, according to Dörnyei (2009b), refers to the skills and qualities one believes one *ought* to possess in order to meet one’s expectations and avoid negative performances.

As regards self-evaluation, the data demonstrate that a high degree of self-efficacy (see Bandura; 1977) is not necessary for one to attempt writing fan fictions in EFL. In other words, it looks most of the fan fiction writers that have been questioned do not need to believe that they are good writers in either L1 or EFL (or both) in order to compose - and then sharing on the Internet - their stories. Some actually think they are poor writers and others are content with considering themselves as “not that bad” when it comes to writing fan fictions.

Furthermore, self-efficacy does not seem to influence the productivity as writers of fan fictions in EFL. It relates, instead, to their productivity as writers in general. In other words, if a writer is productive in his L1 then it is likely that he will be in English too.

To sum up what has been discussed above, it can be affirmed that the answer to the first



research question is “YES.” Yes, reading and/or writing fan fiction does influence motivation, increasing it and consequently affecting it in a positive manner.

However, if one desires to use such activities for formal language learning, it should be kept in mind that some of the respondents think that fan fictions did not affect their motivation at all. Such an opinion is to be taken into consideration if a teacher wishes to introduce activities related to fan fiction writing and reading. Indeed, the aforementioned teacher has to make sure that no one among the students thinks that such activities are a waste of time that does not affect their LL in any way, starting from their motivation.

### 5.2. *Implications about writing apprehension*

The second research question aimed at investigating writing apprehension related to the use of EFL, both for writing fan fictions and at school: “Come influisce l’ansia sulla scrittura in lingua straniera, in particolare modo su quella delle fan fiction in inglese?” (How does anxiety relate to writing in a FL, in particular to writing fan fictions in EFL?)

First, it has been asked if writers feel more comfortable writing in L1 or in English. If most replied, “It makes no difference to me”, then it could be inferred that anxiety is related to writing itself and not to the language used. However, this is not the case. Indeed, almost all of the respondents expressed a personal preference for either L1 or EFL. Dubbed material strongly influence the choice: subjects stated that it is difficult for them to write in EFL if they have are more familiar with the Italian version than with the source one.

“Fear”, on the other hand, has only been cited by few as the reason why they prefer one over the other. Convenience seems to weigh in too: for many subjects writing in their mothertongue is quicker and less tiresome than using English, because they feel they are far more competent in L1 than EFL. Along with *convenience* then, we find *mastery*. The fact that mastery is valued so much suggests, in my humble opinion, that there is an uneasiness related to writing in EFL even though the respondents would not go so far as calling it “apprehension” or “anxiety”. As a matter of fact, less than the half of respondents admitted they feel at least a little bit anxious when writing in EFL. The sources of such nervousness are various, since they are concerned with: poor grades in school, making grammatical or spelling mistakes, failing to use terms in their proper contexts (3) and narrating in a segmented and disrupted manner without meaning to - through a misuse of punctuation or the unwitting choice of unusual collocations, for example. Results, however, show that while writing fan fictions one does not compare oneself with the ideal writer, one would like to be (as hypothesized in 5.1.) but with actual L1 writers. Almost a half of the respondents, including

some of those who claimed that writing in English is not a source of apprehension too, find it hard not to compare themselves with someone who presumably has a higher competence in English than them.

Furthermore, data confirm that perfectionism takes its toll on writers – as postulated by Boice (1993) - by making them afraid of mistakes that might be present in the works they publish.

To see whether perfectionism is something intrinsic to one's personality or due to the importance of avoiding any kind of mistake when handing in one's papers to the teacher, though, we must discuss the results from q.22 to q.25. Data, indeed, demonstrate that just a few of the subjects felt constantly anxious while performing writing activities at school. However, some of them experience writing apprehension every once in a while.

The main sources of writing apprehension for the aforementioned subjects are:

1) Evaluation by the teacher;

Respondents seem to be worried only if they are certain that the teacher is going to give them oral feedback or bad grades, and one of them feels anxious only now that she is in University and feels unable to understand teachers expectations.

2) Lack of skills to complete the written tasks requested;

Respondents claim that the tasks assigned by the English courses teachers were too hard at their level of EFL competence in writing when at school. Indeed, one stated that since she barely learned anything during middle school, she felt like her classmates were ahead of her – in terms of mastery of EFL – throughout the five years of high school.

Whereas subjects compare their works to someone else's when writing fan fictions (usually fan fictions written by L1 speakers), it seems that in school such learners did not. They cared about meeting their own standards (the 'ideal writer') or the teacher's expectations. However, this result does not necessarily mean that the respondents who are worried about making mistakes are simply perfectionists. If form was valued more than content and textual organization by the teacher – and we have stated previously that the teachers' evaluation is important for some of the respondents – it might be the reason why the abovementioned subjects think along these lines:

“Sharing a work that it is not grammatically/syntactically/semantically flawless means:

a) showing the world that I am not a good writer and/or b) that despite all the years I have spent learning English, I am never going to reach the same competence as a L1 writer.”

Results, though, do not show a significant prevalence of form as the highest priority for teachers. Content, more often than not, was deemed as equally important in terms of grading . Textual organization hardly mattered, instead.

Still, writing fan fictions requires a modicum of creativity and the uneasiness perceived by some writers may arise from the fact that teachers stressed the importance of originality. Again, data coming from the answers to do not confirm this particular hypothesis. Such results, together with what has been gathered through the answers to previous questions (q.22, q.23 and q.24), suggest that the formal educational background does not affect fan fiction writers that much in terms of writing apprehension.

Before concluding, it is quite interesting to point out that a few subjects see a benefit in choosing English rather than Italian: writing fan fictions in English grants them a wider audience and it gives them the opportunity to practice a language that they would have no occasion to practice otherwise.

This means that respondents definitely see fan fiction writing as a useful tool to learn the English language. Due to the aforementioned ‘uneasiness’, though, the majority of the writers are more likely to write in Italian than seizing said opportunity.

Concerning the respondents who have never written a fan fiction and those who only write fan fictions in Italian, data indicate that 2 feel anxious about the practice of writing fan fictions itself whereas for the remaining 4 it is a mix of various factors:

- a) lack of enough motivation to sustain the effort of writing in a FL
- b) not feeling talented enough compared to L1 writers
- c) having trouble thinking in English

Even though most writers of fan fictions in EFL share the same concerns, as it has been previously stated, clearly not everyone can put them aside and write in spite of them.

The answer to research question n.2, then, is quite clear: whereas writing apprehension does not seem to be experienced while writing at school – even though there is a mild preoccupation when the written work is going to be graded – fear of mistakes and comparison with L1 writers make it harder for some of the respondents to write in EFL rather than in Italian. However, the writing apprehension experienced does not stop most subjects from writing in EFL and sharing their works on the Internet.

### 5.3. Implications about receptive and productive written skills

The third, and final, research question is the most complex one: *“Può essere la lettura e la scrittura di fan fiction utilizzata per sviluppare e consolidare abilità ricettive e produttive in ambiti scolastici e non?”*

Indeed, it investigates both reading and writing fan fiction and their potential influence on the reading and writing skills either in formal or informal learning environments. Therefore, the answer had to be searched through the analysis of several questions.

First of all, it has been observed that the majority of the respondents are not satisfied with how formal education deals with the teaching and practicing of the writing skills.

Concerning creative writing replies show that many would have appreciated to be taught how to compose enticing narratives in EFL. A few, though, are either uncertain of whether it would have been useful to learn anything other than argumentative and expository writing or not interested in any kind of writing activity.

Generally speaking, data show that subjects have quite a negative opinion about writing activities in the classroom; indeed they believe that the educational system does not devote enough time to training students to write in EFL. Respondents also state that some type of texts receive more attention than others because the kind of training in writing depends on the kind of school: students in commercial and industrial institutes are more likely to be asked to write a certain type of text than students attending a “liceo linguistico”. Such an approach to writing, however, implies that – despite having both reached a B1 or B2 level of proficiency in English - at the end of high school some students might be more proficient in English microlanguages (business English, legal English, etc.) and have a wider knowledge of different writing templates, whereas others are more competent at composing different types of texts (argumentative, explanatory, descriptive, narrative) and use a less connoted lexis.

I believe that such a disparity cannot be avoided in high school. Therefore, the years of English in middle school are fundamental to have a basic knowledge of all the aforementioned elements.

During high school, instead, informal learning seems to be filling the gaps of what is not being taught at school.

It has to be kept in mind, however, that some of the respondents finished high school years ago – most of them attended EFL classes from 1999 to 2007 - so the situation nowadays may have improved from what they recall.

With regard to writing fan fiction, the first aspect that has been investigated is the approach

that writers have when writing in EFL. Do they feel confident enough to write straight into English or do they prefer to translate from L1? Results demonstrate that writing directly in EFL is the preferred option for most of the respondents. Nevertheless, for a few of them it depends on whether they are familiar with the translated/dubbed material (hence they might write in Italian first, sometimes) or not. Most respondents, however, always write their fan fictions straight into English and believe that translation is:

- a) a waste of time and energy
- b) a misleading instrument, that makes people try to be too literal to what they wrote in Italian (sacrificing the clarity of the message they wished to deliver)

This result proves that avoiding the translation from L1 to English - more often than not, at least - is a goal that has been reached by many learners. Nevertheless, it confirms what has been stated by Taylor too (1990), that is to say that translation does not constitute an obstacle to language learning. For most it is a natural step towards the acquisition of language. Then, when one is competent enough to draw the meaning of a term from the context, the L1 equivalent is not needed anymore. Investigating the matter of writing fan fiction more in depth only less than half subjects, though, fall under Sharples' (1999: 112) *planners* category. A result that confirms his statement: although academic writing usually needs planning, fiction writing normally encourages writers to be *discoverers*. Therefore, the rest of the subjects plans only every now and then and tend to discover what characters are trying to accomplish while unfolding the narration.

Aside from outlines and brainstorming, fan fiction writers make use of other instruments when composing a story in EFL. Despite many have stated that they only think in English when writing in EFL, it does not seem to be true. Otherwise there would not be so many of them who use a bilingual dictionary, either printed or online. This suggests that while conceptualizing one's story the mind can supply with the Italian equivalent when an English term does not come to one's mind. Bilingual dictionaries, then, prove to be very useful even at an advanced level of proficiency in the English language. Indeed, the most cited monolingual 'dictionary' is not 100% reliable. In fact, Urban Dictionary is open to anyone who wants to add one's own definition of a colloquial term or figure of speech. Concerning more authoritative resources, The Oxford English Dictionary has been barely mentioned (by one respondent who is currently studying for her BA in English Literature). Another interesting trend that can be perceived while looking at data is the limited use of thesauruses. To me, this may suggest that English is not as averse to repetition as romance languages (see Vinay & Darbelnet; 1995: 269), and therefore those who write fan fictions in EFL do not feel the need to use a thesaurus as much as they would if they were writing in Italian.

In conclusion to the discussion of results about writing, it has to be pointed out that results show that fan fiction can be used to teach different varieties of English. In fact, the choice between AmE and BrE – Australian or Indian English are rarely used in fan fictions – is seldom overlooked by fan fiction writers. It might not bother some other writers enough to make sure that their British characters use the proper language (they have people talking about ‘elevators’ and not ‘lifts’, for example) but nearly half of them are aware of the fact that they are preferring one variety over the other. Moreover, some desire of being more attentive to the matter of varieties if only they knew AmE or BrE a little better. This means that if they were offered the possibility of studying varieties through reading fan fictions, they would definitely take it so that they can improve as writers.

Reading fan fictions, actually, seems to be more of an influence on EFL learning in terms of improving both the reading and the writing skills. Data present a small minority that prefers reading in Italian, an outcome that might be connected to two possible lines of thought:

- 1) since reading in English is like reading in Italian, for me, I choose English because it is more likely that I find interesting stories and when the fandom offers more works in said language.
- 2) since fan fictions use a simpler language than novels, I might as well take the opportunity to practice my reading skills every now and then.

Such reasoning is confirmed by data: indeed, the overwhelming quantity of fan fictions to read is the main reason why English is preferred over Italian along with an increased possibility of finding satisfying narratives. Whereas school seems to find it difficult to promote reading in EFL, foreign fan fiction are chosen willingly even when one has the possibility of reading in Italian.

Since, as observed by Pugh (2005), fan fictions can be based on literary masterpieces, results suggest that these stories can be useful instruments in the didactic of English literature.

Furthermore, answers demonstrate that most respondents are sure that reading fan fictions improved their knowledge of English. Although for some fan fictions did not have such a positive influence on their FLL - either because they were the cause of lapses in concentration or because the language used in the stories was already too basic for the level that had been reached when one discovered fan fictions – these results indicate that fan fictions can have quite an important role in informal language learning. What is more, data reveal to what extent reading fan fiction helped subjects through English language learning. As might be expected, the most apperceived result is the expansion of the vocabulary at one’s disposal, especially if fan fictions are based on source materials that make use of microlanguages (legal English in Law&Order, for example). The understanding of figures of speech and acquisition of colloquial forms appears to have been

enhanced by reading fan fictions<sup>28</sup> too. Results even mention the improvement of grammar and an increased acknowledgment of register. It all expresses the potential of using fan fictions in formal learning too.

To conclude, as stated above it seems that fan fiction has a deeper impact on informal learning than it has over academic achievements. However, this does not mean that the respondents are opposed to introducing activities based on fan fictions in formal environments (for example during curricular, or extra-curricular, English lessons) too.

Replying to question q.40, which asked if fanfictions can be used as resource to promote the development and improvement of reading and writing skills in school, a substantial part of the subjects were positive that reading and writing fan fiction can help learning EFL by developing and improving the written receptive and productive skills. Such data confirm that pleasurable activities, relevant to one's interests, can be extremely helpful in formal LL. However, as observed in Chapter 4, for most of the other respondents teachers need to be actively involved in the selection of the material that is going to be read by students. Moreover, said teachers have to carefully plan their lessons so that students make the most out of reading and writing fan fictions. Data, therefore, also show that respondents value the role of teachers with regard to LL.

In summary, then, the answer to the third research question (Can reading and writing fan fiction activities be designed to develop and improve receptive and productive skills, either in formal or informal LL environment?) is "yes, reading and writing fan fiction activities can be designed to improve receptive and productive skills, even though it is reading fan fic that seems to be more fitting to develop and improve both skills in both formal and informal LL environments."

#### *5.4. Limitations and further research*

The main limitation to this study is the fact that the sample of people involved was very small, and thus it cannot be generalized as if it represented all learners who write fan fictions in EFL. Moreover, the fact the research hypothesis was investigated through the use of a questionnaire constitutes a limitation to the objectiveness of replies. Indeed, since the study collects opinions on one's own language learning history rather than observing learners behavior first hand during classroom practices, data collected are completely subjective (based on the feeling one has on one's own improvement in LL and not on actual facts that demonstrate or deny said improvement, for

---

<sup>28</sup> As seen in Chapter 4, lexis was mentioned by 18 subjects, figures of speech by 7 and colloquial speech by 5. Moreover, 7 perceive an improvement in all the aforementioned aspects (PADRONANZA).

example).

Another limitation to this study is the age range of the respondents. Despite the initial intentions, which were to interview people within the 13-19 – who still attend the mandatory English courses in a formal environment (middle or high school) - most people who sent back their replies to the questionnaire are within the 19-25 age range. The youngest respondent, actually, is 17. Therefore, this small sample is not representative of people to whom formal learning is most frequently addressed to, that is to say teenagers.

Nevertheless, it can be a starting point to investigate the effects new literacies (such as fan fictions) have on young adults foreign language learning in both formal and in formal environment.



## REFERENCES

- ADELMAN, C., JENKINS, D. & KEMMIS, S. (1976), "Re-thinking case study: notes from the second Cambridge conference". *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 6: 139-50.
- ALPERT, R. & HABER, R. (1960), "Anxiety in academic achievement situations". *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 61(2): 207-215.
- ALDRICH, P.G., (1982), "Adult writers: some reasons for ineffective writing on the job". *College Composition and Communication*, 33(3): 284-287.
- ARNETT, J.J. (2000), "Emerging adulthood: a theory of development from the late teens through the twenties". *American Psychologist*, 55(5): 469-480.
- ARNOLD, M.B. (1960), *Emotion and personality*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- BAILEY, K.M., (1983), "Competitiveness and anxiety in adult second language learning: Looking at and through the diary studies". In SELIGER, H.W. & LONG, M.H. (Eds.), *Classroom orientated research in second language acquisition* (pp. 67-102), Rowley (MA), Newbury House.
- BAIRD, A., (1976), "The study and teaching of literature". *ELT Journal*, 30(4): 281-286.
- BALBONI, P.E., (2013), "Il ruolo delle emozioni di studente ed insegnante nel processo di apprendimento e insegnamento linguistico". *ELLE 4*.
- BALBONI, P.E. (2008), *Le sfide di Babele: insegnare le lingue nelle società complesse*, Torino, UTET.
- BALBONI P.E. (2007), *La comunicazione interculturale*, Venezia, Marsilio.
- BALBONI, P.E. (2004), "Educazione letteraria e didattica della letteratura". *Scuola e lingue moderne*, 9: 26-30.
- BANDURA, A., (1977), "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change". *Psychological Review*, 84(2): 191-215.
- BEGOTTI, P., (2007), "La formazione dell'adulto". *Scuola e lingue Moderne*, 6: 4-7.
- BERNHARDT, E.B., (1991), *Reading development in a second language : theoretical , empirical*

*and classroom perspectives*, Norwood (N.J.), Ablex Publishing Corporation.

BLACK, R.W., (2005), "Access and affiliation: The literacy and composition practices of English-language learners in an online fanfiction community". *Journal of adolescent & adult literacy*, 49(2): 118-128.

BOICE, R., (1993), "Writing blocks and tacit knowledge". *The Journal of Higher Education*, 64(1): 19-54.

BOSCOLO, P., (1986), *Psicologia dell'apprendimento scolastico. Aspetti cognitivi e motivazionali*, Torino, UTET.

BONDI, M., (1982), "Dalla lettura alla scrittura: implicazioni didattiche di una linguistica del discorso". *Scuola e lingue moderne*, 5/6/7: 114-148.

BRAND, A.G., (1990), "Writing and feelings: checking our vital signs". *Rhetoric Review*, 8(2): 290-308.

BRAND, A.G., (1987), "The why of cognition: emotion and the writing process". *College Composition and Communication*, 38(4): 436-443.

BRANDT, D., (1994), "Remembering writing, remembering reading". *College Composition and Communication*, 45(4): 459-479.

BJORK, L. & RAISANEN, C., (2003), *Academic writing: a university writing course*, Lund, Studentlitteratur.

BUSSE, K. & HELLEKSON, K., (2006), "Introduction: Work in Progress". In HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K., (Eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the Internet* (pp.5-32), North Carolina, McFarland Press.

BYRNE, D., (1988), *Teaching writing skills*, London and New York, Longman.

CAON, F., (2010), *Parole in viaggio*, Perugia, Guerra.

CAON, F., (2009), "Canzone pop e canzone d'autore per la didattica della lingua, della cultura italiana e per l'approccio allo studio della letteratura"

[http://venus.unive.it/filim/materiali/accesso\\_gratuito/Filim\\_caon\\_teorìa.pdf](http://venus.unive.it/filim/materiali/accesso_gratuito/Filim_caon_teorìa.pdf) (Last consultation on 28/08/2013).

- CAON, F., (2006), *Pleasure in Language Learning*, Perugia, Guerra.
- CARDONA, M., (2004), *Apprendere il lessico di una lingua straniera: aspetti linguistici, psicolinguistici e glottodidattici*, Bari, Adriatica.
- CARDONA, M., (2001), *Il ruolo della memoria nell'apprendimento delle lingue*, Torino, Utet.
- CELENTIN, P., (2004) "Vantaggi e presupposti della formazione in rete per l'aggiornamento in servizio dell'insegnante". In SERRAGIOTTO, G. (Ed.), *Le lingue straniere nella scuola: nuovi percorsi, nuovi ambienti, nuovi docenti* (pp.178-191), Torino, UTET.
- CHIK A. & BREIDBACH, S., (2011), "Identity, Motivation and Autonomy: A Tale of Two Cities". In MURRAY, G., XUESONG, A. & LAMB T., (Eds.) *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 145-159), Bristol, Multilingual Matters.
- CSIKSZENTMIHALY, M., (1990), "Literacy and intrinsic motivation". *Daedalus*, 119(2): 115-140.
- CLEMENT, R., GARDNER, R. C. & SMYTHE, P. C.,(1977), "Motivational variables in second language acquisition: a study of francophones learning English". *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 9: 123-133.
- COPPA, F., (2006), "A Brief History Of Media Fandom". In HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K., (Eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the Internet* (pp. 41-59), North Carolina, McFarland Press.
- COPPA, F.,(2006), "Writing Bodies In Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical performance". In HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K., (Eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the Internet* (pp. 225-244), North Carolina, McFarland Press.
- CORDER, S.P., (1967), "The significance of learners' errors". *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 5(2-3): 161-169.
- CORTELAZZO M. A., (2002) "Le ripetizioni inevitabili". *Il Sole-24 Ore (Guida agli enti locali)*, 8: 88.
- CROOKES G., & SCHMIDT, R. W. (1991), "Motivation: reopening the research agenda". *Language Learning*, 41(4):469-512.

- CUCCU, R., (2000) “Motivazione, creatività e scrittura”. *Scuola e Lingue Moderne*, 7: 16-21.
- CUMMINS J. & DAVISON C., (2007), *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, New York, Springer.
- CURCI, A.M. (2005), "Educazione linguistica come educazione plurilingue". *DaF-Werkstatt*, 6: 59-70.
- DALY, J., (1991), “Understanding communication apprehension: an introduction for language educators”. In HORWITZ, E.K. & YOUNG, D.J. (Eds.) *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 3-13), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- DANESI, M., (1988), *Neurolinguistica e glottodidattica*, Padova, Liviana.
- DE MARTINO, B., CAMERER & C., ADOLPHS, R., (2010), “Amygdala damage eliminates monetary loss aversion”. *PNAS Journal*, 107(8): 3788-3792.
- DERECHO, A., (2006), “Archontic Literature: A Definition, A History and Several Theories of Fan Fiction”. In HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K., (Eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the Internet* (pp. 61-78), North Carolina, McFarland Press.
- DISICK, R. S. (1972), “Developing Positive Attitudes in Intermediate Foreign Language Classes”. *The Modern Language Journal*, 56(7): 417–420.
- DÖRNYEI, Z. & CLEMENT, R. (2001a). “Motivational characteristics of learning different target languages: Results of a nationwide survey”. In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 399-432), Honolulu, HI, University of Hawai’i Press.
- DÖRNYEI, Z., (2009a), *Psychology of Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- DÖRNYEI, Z., (2009b), “The L2 Motivational Self System”. In DÖRNYEI, Z. & USHIODA, E. (Eds.), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self* (pp. 9-42).
- DÖRNYEI, Z., (2002), “The motivational basis of language learning tasks”. In ROBINSON P. (Ed.), *Individual differences and instructed language learning* (pp. 137-157), Amsterdam, Benjamins.

- DÖRNYEI, Z., (2001b), *Teaching and researching motivation*, Harlow, Pearson Education.
- DÖRNYEI, Z., (1994), "Motivation and motivating in the foreign language Classroom". *Modern Language Journal*, 78(3): 273-284.
- DUBIN F. & OLSHTAIN, E., (1980), "The interface of writing and reading". *TESOL Quarterly*, 14 (3): 353-364.
- FATHMAN A.K. & WHALLEY, E. (1990), "Teacher response to student writing: Focus on form versus content". In KROLL, B. (Ed.), *Second language writing: research insights for the classroom* (pp. 178-190), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- FISHMAN, J., LUNSFORD, A., MCGREGOR, B. & OTUTEYE, M., (2005), "Performing writing, performing literacy". *College Composition and Communication*, 57(2): 224-252.
- FRIEDLANDER, A., (1990) "Composing in English: first language effects". In KROLL, B (Ed.), *Second language writing: research insights for the classroom* (pp. 109-125), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- GARDNER, R.C., (2001), "Integrative motivation and second language acquisition". In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 1-19), Honolulu (HI), University of Hawai'i Press.
- GARDNER, R.C., (1985), *Social Psychology and Language Learning: the Role of Attitudes and Motivation*, London: Edward Arnold.
- GARDNER R.C. & MACINTYRE, P.D. (1992). "A student's contributions to second language acquisition. Part 1: Cognitive variables". *Language Teaching*, 25: 211-220.
- GARDNER, R.C. & MACINTYRE, P.D., (1991), "Anxiety and second language learning: toward a theoretical clarification". In HORWITZ, E.K. & YOUNG, D.J. (Eds.) *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 41-53), Englewood Cliffs (NJ), Prentice Hall.
- GARDNER, R.C. & MACINTYRE, P.D. (1991a). "An instrumental motivation in language study: Who says it isn't effective". *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 1: 266-272.
- GARDNER, R.C & MACINTYRE, P.D. (1991b), "Methods and Results in the Study of Anxiety

- and Language Learning: A Review of the Literature”. *Language Learning*, 41(1): 85–117.
- GARDNER, R.C & MACINTYRE, P.D., (1994), “The Subtle Effects of Language Anxiety on Cognitive Processing in the Second Language”. *Language Learning*, 44(2): 283–305.
- GARDNER, R.C. & LAMBERT, W.E. (1972), *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning*, Rowley (MA), Newbury House Publishers.
- GHENGHESH, P. (2001), “The Motivation of L2 Learners: does it decrease with age?”. *English Language Teaching*, 3(1): 128-141.
- GIUDICE, B., (2012), “La canzone nella classe d’italiano: non solo grammatica”. *Officina.it*, Aprile 2012 [http://www.almaedizioni.it/media/upload/officina/raccolte/06/officina\\_72dpi.pdf](http://www.almaedizioni.it/media/upload/officina/raccolte/06/officina_72dpi.pdf).
- GOODMAN, K., (1970), “Reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game”. In SINGER H. & RUDEL, R.B. (Eds.), *Theoretical models and Processes of Reading*, Newark (N.J), International reading Association.
- GOLEMAN, D., (1996), *Emotional Intelligence*, London, Bloomsbury.
- GRELLET, F., (1990), *Developing reading skills: a practical guide to reading comprehension exercises*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- GROTJAHN, R. (1987), “On the methodological basis of introspective methods”. In FAERCH, C. & KASPER, G. (Eds.) *Introspection in Second Language Research*, Clevedon Avon, Multilingual Matters.
- HANEDA, M., (2007), “Modes of Engagement in Foreign Language Writing: An Activity Theoretical Perspective”. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 64(2): 297-328.
- HAYES, J.R., (1996) “A new model of cognition and affect in writing”. In LEVY M. & RANDELL S. (Eds.), *The Science of Writing* (pp. 3-27) Hillsdale (NJ), Erlbaum.
- HAYES, J.R., NASH, J.G. (1996) “On the nature of planning in writing”. In LEVY M. & RANDELL S. (Eds.), *The Science of Writing* (pp. 29-55) Hillsdale (NJ), Erlbaum.
- HEDGE, T., (1989), *Writing*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K., (2006), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the*

*Internet*, North Carolina, McFarland Press.

HESTER, R.M.,(1972), "From reading to the reading of literature". *The Modern Language Journal*, 56(5): 284-291.

HILLESON, M., (1996), "I want to talk with them, but I don't want them to hear: An introspective study of second language anxiety in an English-medium school". In BAILEY, K.M & NUNAN, D. (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom* (pp. , 248-277), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

HORWITZ, E.K., (2010) "Research Timeline: Foreign and second language anxiety". *Language Teaching*, 43(2): 154-167.

HORWITZ, E.K. (1988), "The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students". *The Modern Language Journal*, 72(3): 283–294.

HORWITZ, E.K., HORWITZ, M.B. & COPE J.A., "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety". In HORWITZ, E.K. & YOUNG, D.J. (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 27-36), Englewood Cliff (NJ), Prentice Hall.

HORST, M., (2005), "Learning L2 Vocabulary through Extensive Reading: A measurement study". *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(3): 355-382.

INGHILLERI, P., (1986), "L'Importanza dei processi psicologici quotidiani nell'evoluzione culturale: uno studio in Thailandia". In MASSIMINI, F. & INGHILLERI, P. (Eds.) *L' Esperienza quotidiana: Teoria e metodo d'analisi* (pp. 251-272), Franco Angeli Editore, Milano.

JACOBS, G., (1986), "Quickwriting: a technique for invention in writing". *ELT Journal*, 40(4): 282-290.

JENKINS, H. (1996a), *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide*, New York, NYU Press.

JENKINS, H. (1996b), *Fan, bloggers and gamers: exploring the participatory culture*, New York, NYU Press.

JENKINS, H. (1992), *Textual Poachers: television fans and participatory culture*, New York, Routledge.

- JULKUNEN, K. (2001). "Situation and task-specific motivation in foreign language learning". In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 29-41). Honolulu (HI), University of Hawai'i Press.
- KELLER, J.M., (1994), "Motivation in instructional design". In HUSÉN, T. & POSTELTHWAITE, T.N. (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of education*, Volume 7 (2nd ed., pp. 3943-3947), Oxford, Pergamon Press.
- KLEINMANN, H.H., (1977) "Avoidance behavior in adult second language acquisition". *Language Learning*, 28 (1): 93-107.
- KNOWLES, M., (1973), *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, Merrill, Houston.
- KRASHEN, S., 1977, "Some issues relating to the Monitor Model". In BROWN, H. D., YORIO C. & CRYMES, R. (Eds.), *On TESOL '77: Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language: Trends in Research and Practice*. Washington: TESOL, pp. 144-158.
- KRASHEN, S., (1982), *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*, Oxford, Pergamon Press.
- KROLL, B., (1990), "What time does buy? ESL student performance on home versus class compositions". In KROLL, B. (Ed.), *Second language writing:: research insights for the classroom* (pp.140-154), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- LAMB, M., (2004), "Integrative motivation in a globalized world". *System* 32(1): 3-19.
- LAMB, M., (2007), "The impact of school on EFL learning motivation: an Indonesian case study". *Tesol Quarterly*, 41(4): 758-780.
- LATIF, M., (2009), "Toward a New Process-Based Indicator for Measuring Writing Fluency: Evidence from L2 Writers' Think-Aloud Protocols". *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 65(4): 531-558.
- MACCHITELLA, A., (1989a), "Didattica della letteratura secondo i metodologi britannici: R. Fowler". *Scuola e lingue moderne*, 6: 190-192.
- MACCHITELLA, A., (1989b), "Didattica della letteratura secondo i metodologi britannici: C.J. Brumfit". *Scuola e lingue moderne*, 7: 235-237.



- MACINTYRE, P., (2002), "Motivation, anxiety and emotion in second language acquisition". In ROBINSON P. (Ed), *Individual differences and instructed language learning* (pp. 45-68), Amsterdam, Benjamins.
- MACINTYRE, P., (1995), "How Does Anxiety Affect Second Language Learning?: A Reply to Sparks and Ganschow". *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1): 90-99.
- MADSEN, H.S., BROWN, L.B & JONES, R.L., (1991), "Evaluating Students Attitudes Towards Second Language Tests". In HORWITZ, E.K. & YOUNG, D.J. (Eds.) *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 27-36), Englewood Cliffs (NJ), Prentice Hall.
- MARKUS H.R., (2006) "Foreword". In DUNKEL, C. & KERPELMAN, J. (Eds.) *Possible Selves: Theory, Research and Applications*. (pp.xi-xiv). New York, Nova Science.
- MARIANI, L. (2010), "Attitudini e atteggiamenti nell'apprendimento linguistico". *Italiano LinguaDue*, 1: 253-270.
- MAZZOTTA, P., (1999), "Videogames e sviluppo delle capacità di apprendimento autonomo". *Scuola e lingue moderne*, 9: 8-11.
- MCCARTHY, P., MEIER, S., RINDERER, R., (1985), "Self-efficacy and writing". *College Composition and Communication*, 36(4): 465-471.
- MCDONOUGH, S.H., (1986), *Psychology in foreign language teaching*, London, Allen & Unwin.
- MCGROARTY, M., (2001), "Situating Second Language Motivation". In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 69-92), Honolulu (HI), University of Hawai'i Press.
- MCLEOD, S., (1987), "Some thoughts about feelings: the affective domain and the writing process". *College Composition and Communication*, 38(4): 426-435.
- MERRIAM, S.B., CAFFARELLA, R.S, BAUMGARTNER, L.M, (2007), *Learning in adulthood*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- MORRIS, J. (1972), "Creative Reading". *ELT Journal*, 26(3): 257-261.
- MARKUS, H.R, & RUVOLO, A. (1989). "Possible selves: Personalized representations of goals". In PERVIN, L.A. (Ed.), *Goal concepts in personality and social psychology*. (pp. 211-241).

Hillsdale (NJ), Erlbaum.

MEJIAS, H., APPLBAUM, R. L., APPLBAUM, S. J., & TROTTER, R. T. (1991) "Oral communication apprehension and Hispanics: An exploration of oral communication apprehension of Mexican American students in Texas". In HORWITZ, E.K. & YOUNG, D.J. (Eds.) *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp.87-97), Englewood Cliffs (NJ), Prentice Hall.

MURRAY, G., (2011), "Imagination, Metacognition and the L2 Self". In MURRAY, G., XUESONG, A. & LAMB T., (Eds.) *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 75-90), Bristol, Multilingual Matters.

NICHOLAS, B.J., ROSSITER, M.J. & ABBOTT, M.L., (2011), "The power of story in the ESL classroom". *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 67(2): 247-268.

NOELS, K.A., (2001), "New Orientations in Language Learning Motivation: Towards a Model of Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Integrative Orientations and Motivation". In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 43-68), Honolulu (HI), University of Hawai'i Press.

NOELS, K.A., PELLETIER, L.G., CLÉMENT, R. & VALLERAND, R.J. (2000), "Why Are You Learning a Second Language: Motivational Orientations and Self-Determination Theory". *Language Learning*, 50(1): 57-85.

NUNAN, D., (1992), *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ODDONE, C., (2011), "Didattizzare una canzone: obiettivi e attività". *Officina.it*, Aprile 2012  
[http://www.almaedizioni.it/media/upload/officina/raccolte/06/officina\\_72dpi.pdf](http://www.almaedizioni.it/media/upload/officina/raccolte/06/officina_72dpi.pdf).

PAIVA, V.L., (2011), "Identity, motivation and autonomy in second language acquisition from the perspective of complex adaptive systems". In MURRAY, G., XUESONG, A. & LAMB T., (Eds.) *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 57-74), Bristol, Multilingual Matters.

PARRISH, J. (2007), "Inventing a universe: reading and writing Internet fan fiction". *PhD Dissertation* (<http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/8963/1/Parrish2007.pdf> - Last accessed on 29/09/2013), University of Pittsburgh.

- PENZATO, M., (2012), “Fanfiction, Poetry, Blogs, and Journals: A Case Study of the Connection between Extracurricular and Academic Writings”. *Stylus: a journal of first-year writing*, 3(1): 10-24, University Of Central California.
- PUGH, S., (2005), *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a literary context*, Bridgend, Poetry Wales Press.
- PROPP, V., (1966), *La morfologia della fiaba*, Torino, Einaudi.
- RAIMES, A., (1983), *Techniques in teaching writing*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- RIGO, R., (2005), *Didattica delle abilità linguistiche. Percorsi di progettazione e formazione*, Armando Editore, Milano.
- RICHARDS, K., (2003), *Qualitative Inquiry in Tesol*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- RIVERS, W., (1981) *Teaching foreign language skills*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- ROGERS, C., (1961), *On becoming a person*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin.
- RYAN, R. M. & DECI, E. L. (2004), “Autonomy is no illusion: Self-determination theory and the empirical study of authenticity, awareness, and will”. In GREENBERG, J., KOOLE, S.L, & PYSZCZYNSKI, T. (Eds.), *Handbook of experimental existential psychology* (pp. 449-479), New York: Guilford Press.
- SADE, L.A., (2011), “Emerging Selves, Language Learning and Motivation”. In MURRAY, G., XUESONG, A. & LAMB T., (Eds.) *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 42-56), Bristol, Multilingual Matters.
- SAITO, Y., HORWITZ, E.K & GARZA, T.J., (1999), “Foreign language reading anxiety”. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(2), 202-218.
- SAUVÉ, V., (2005), “Storyweavers: Holistic education for ESL/EFL learners”. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL du Canada*, 20(1), 89–102.
- SCODARI, C. & FELDER, J., (2000) “Creating a Pocket Universe: ‘Shippers,’ Fan Fiction, and the X-Files Online”. *Communication Studies*, 51(3): 238-257.
- SERRAGIOTTO, G., (2004), *Le lingue straniere nella scuola: nuovi percorsi, nuovi ambienti*,

*nuovi docenti*, Torino, UTET.

SKEHAN, P., (1989), *Individual difference in second language learning*, London, Arnold.

SCHUMANN, J., (1997), *The Neurobiology of Affect in Language*, Supplement to Language Learning 48.

SHANAHAN, D., (1997), "Articulating the Relationship Between Language, Literature, and Culture: Toward a New Agenda for Foreign Language Teaching and Research". *Modern Language Journal*, 81(2): 164-174.

SCHUGURENSKY, D., (2000), "The forms of informal learning: towards a conceptualization of the field". *WALL Working Paper*, 19:  
<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/2733/2/19formsofinformal.pdf> (last consultation on 09/08/2013).

SHARPLES, M., (1999), *How we write: writing as a creative design*, New York, Routledge.

SPARKS, R.J. & GANSCHOW, L., (1991), "Foreign language learning differences: Affective or native language aptitude?". *The Modern Language Journal*, 71(1): 2-16.

SPIELBERGER, C. D., GORSUCH R. L., LUSHENE, R., VAGG, P. R., & JACOBS, G. A. (1983), *Manual for the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory*, Palo Alto (CA) Consulting Psychologists Press.

STASI, M., (2006), "The Toy Soldiers from Leeds: The Slash Palimpsest". In HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K. (Eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the Internet* (pp.115-133), North Carolina, McFarland Press.

STEIN, L.E., (2006), "This Drafted Thing: Fannish Storytelling Through New Media". In HELLEKSON, K. & BUSSE, K. (Eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the age of the Internet* (pp.245-260), North Carolina, McFarland Press.

STENHOUSE, L., (1983), "The relevance of practice to theory". *Theory into practice*, 22(3): 211-215.

SWANBORN, P., (2010), *Case study research: what, why and how?*, Sage Publications Ltd.

- SYED, Z., (2005), "Notions of self in foreign language learning: a qualitative analysis". In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 127-148), Honolulu (HI), University of Hawai'i Press.
- TAYLOR., L., (1990), *Teaching and learning vocabulary*, New York, Prentice Hall.
- THOMAS, G.V, TORRANCE, M. & ROBINSON,E.J., (2004), "The Writing Strategies of Graduate Research Students in the Social Sciences". *The Journal of Higher Education*, 27 (3): 379-392.
- THOMAS, A., (2006), "Fan fiction online: Engagement, critical response and affective play through writing". *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 29(3), 226-2439.
- TIERNEY, R. & PEARSON, D, (1985), "Towards a compositional model of reading". In HEDLEY C.N. & BARATTA, A.N. (Eds.), *Contexts of reading*, Norwood (NJ), Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- TITONE, R., (1985), "Measurement and Evaluation of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education. A Psycholinguistic Perspective". *Issues in applied psycholinguistics*, 17(2-3): 19-30.
- TITONE, R., (1999), *Problemi di psicopedagogia del linguaggio. Dalla psicolinguistica alla glottodidattica*, Perugia, Guerra.
- TOBIAS, R.B., (1992), *Temi e strategie*, trad. DELLA CASA, C., Milano, Nord.
- TOMLINSON, B., "An approach to the teaching of continuous writing in ESL classes". *ELT Journal*, 37(1): 7-15.
- USHIODA, E., (2006), "Language Motivation in a Reconfigured Europe: Access, Identity, Autonomy". *Journal Of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(2): 141-168.

USHIODA, E. (2001), "Language learning at university: Exploring the role of motivational thinking". In DÖRNYEI, Z. & SCHMIDT, R. (Eds.), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 93-125). Honolulu (HI), University of Hawai'i Press.

VANDE BERG, C.K., (1993), "Managing learner anxiety in literature courses". *The French Review*, 67 (1): 27-36.

VINAY, J.P. & DARBELNET, J., (1995), *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*, Amsterdam, Benjamins

WEINER, B. (1986), *An attributional theory of motivation and emotion*, New York, Springer-Verlag.

WILLIAMS, E., (1984), *Reading in the language classroom*, London, Macmillan.

YORIO, C.A, (1985) "The ESL reading class: Reality or unreality". In HEDLEY, C.N. & BARATTA, A.N. (Eds.), *Contexts of reading*, (pp. 151-164), Norwood (NJ), Ablex Publishing Corporation.

ZINSSER, W., (2010), "Writing in English as a second language". *The American Scholar*: <http://theamericanscholar.org/writing-english-as-a-second-language/#.UgpjT5KpVuM> (last consultation on 13/08/2013).

ZINSSER, W, (1976), *On writing well*, New York, Harper & Row.

## APPENDIX I.

### The preliminary Questionnaire

#### *Writers' questionnaire*

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Education (aka “what are you studying / what did you study” related to the English language):**

**Have you ever wrote a fanfic in English:**

**Do you prefer to write in English or in your mothertongue:**

**Why is that:**

**Do you feel anxious about writing in English:**

**Have you ever got any feedback about your writing:**

**If you did, was it positive or negative:**

**Did it influence your motivation for studying English:**

**Did it influence your academic results in the English course:**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### *Readers' questionnaire*

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Education:**

**Did reading fanfictions improve your knowledge of English:**

**Did it influence your motivation for studying English:**

**Did it influence your academic results in the English course:**

**What is blocking you from writing in English:**

## **APPENDIX II.**

### **The open form questionnaire**

- 1) A che fascia di età appartieni?
  - a) 13-19
  - b) 19-25
  - c) 26 - 99
  
- 2) Da quanti anni studi inglese? / Per quanti anni hai studiato inglese?
  
- 3) Come sei venuto/a a conoscenza delle fanfiction?
  
- 4) Hai mai letto una fanfic in inglese?
  
- 5) Hai mai scritto una fanfic in inglese?
  
- 6) Perché hai deciso di scrivere in inglese?
  
- 7) Ha influenzato la tua motivazione a migliorare la conoscenza della lingua?
  
- 8) Se sì, come?
  
- 9) Ha influenzato i tuoi risultati scolastici?
  
- 10) Se sì, come?
  
- 11) Come ti inciti a scrivere in inglese?
  
- 12) Ti vedi come un buon scrittore o una buona scrittrice?
  
- 13) Preferisci scrivere in italiano o in inglese?
  
- 14) Perché?
  
- 15) Trovi ansiogeno scrivere in inglese?
  
- 16) Se sì, perché?



- 17) Qual è l'aspetto più difficile dello scrivere in inglese, secondo te?
- 18) Hai mai ricevuto feedback per le tue fanfic in inglese?
- 19) Se sì, positivo o negativo?
- 20) A che cosa attribuisce un'eventuale mancanza di feedback?
- 21) Se non scrivi, che cosa ti blocca e t'impedisce di farlo?
- 22) Hai mai trovato ansiogeno scrivere in lingua straniera, a scuola?
- 23) Se sì, perché?
- 24) Che cosa ci si aspettava dai tuoi scritti?
- 25) La creatività era giudicata come una componente importante?
- 26) Ti piacerebbe che ci fossero state più attività per allenarti alla scrittura creativa in inglese?
- 27) A tuo parere, la scuola dedica abbastanza ad allenare gli studenti alla scrittura in inglese?
- 28) Preferisci leggere fanfic in inglese o in italiano?
- 29) Potresti motivare la tua scelta?
- 30) Leggere fanfic ha migliorato la tua conoscenza dell'inglese?
- 31) Se sì, come?
- 32) Ha influenzato i tuoi risultati scolastici?
- 33) Se sì, come?
- 34) Qual è il tuo approccio alla scrittura in inglese? Scrivi direttamente nella lingua straniera o traduci dall'italiano?
- 35) Pianifichi ciò che scriverai?

- 36) Usi strategie come il brainstorming, tabelle o diagrammi?
- 37) Con quali strumenti ti aiuti? (vocabolario / dizionario dei sinonimi e dei contrari, etc.)
- 38) Ti preoccupi di rispecchiare le varietà dell'inglese (BrE vs AmE, per esempio), quando scrivi?
- 39) Hai mai pensato di scrivere anche in altre lingue straniere?
- 40) A tuo parere, si potrebbero usare le fanfic come strumento per promuovere lo sviluppo della competenza ricettiva e produttiva scritta? (ad esempio attraverso un laboratorio di scrittura creativa)