

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue: L2/HL Writing and Technology

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The growing recognition of the important role that technology plays in language learning has been reflected in increasingly dynamic and productive discussions on the topic of second language (L2) and heritage language (HL) instruction and writing theory. This increased activity has resulted in a surge in publications in well-known journals (e.g., the *Journal of Second Language Writing, System*) that have shown the prevalence of technology in language research. It goes without saying that technology in L2 and HL classrooms has also found its place and continues to flourish in instructional settings.

The shift toward digital instruction has resulted from both advances in and the expansion of instructional modalities (i.e., in both synchronous and asynchronous online instruction) and the affordances of the tools used for composing purposes (e.g., wikis for academic writing, digital stories for semiotic resource integration, infographics for synthesis writing, and Twitter for creating tweets). These modalities and tools have allowed: (1) the practice of traditional, hybrid, and new genres; (2) the potential to scaffold students using instructor or peer (multimodal) feedback; and (3) the creation of multimodal texts (i.e., the integration of writing, sound, visuals, etc.) that mirror students' real-life practices and experiences using social media.

However, despite the rise of multimodal digital communication and research in this field, we have not seen a dramatic shift in the manner in which writing is taught in language classrooms. L2 and HL writing is still often viewed as a way to develop lexico-grammatical accuracy in monomodal texts, using monomodal-oriented instructional methods, which fail to execute coherently articulated sequences of writing instruction that address multiliteracies and multimodality (Bernhardt et al. 2015; Hubert and Bonzo 2019). This failure occurs even with calls such as the 2016 position statement by the National Council of Teachers of English (2018) that affirms that "writing instruction should support students as they compose with a variety of modalities and technologies" and claims that enacting writing instruction in a way that ignores multimodality is obsolete and out of touch.

This Special Issue, L2/HL Writing and Technology, acknowledges the importance of multimodal texts and multimodal approaches to writing (see also Oskoz and Elola 2020) by highlighting how digital tools have been utilized in L2 and HL classrooms to integrate multimodality either in the students' composition processes or in the ways in which instructors provide feedback in pedagogical and research contexts. This Special Issue features nine articles that consider diverse theoretical perspectives (e.g., cognitive, socio-cultural approaches), instructional practices for L2/HL (e.g., task-based approaches, critical pedagogies, multiliteracies approaches), and research methodologies (e.g., surveys, eye-tracking, interviews, (multimodal) text analyses). Specifically, this Issue includes French as a second language (FL2), Spanish as a second language (SL2) and heritage language (SHL), and translanguaging (i.e., two languages in contact, in this case Spanish and English). Thus, the scholarship in this Special Issue aims to conceptualize the exploration of two areas: (1) instructional perspectives and practices and (2) multiliteracies and multilingualism, although several of the articles provide insights into both areas.



Citation: Elola, Idoia, and Raychel Vasseur. 2023. Introduction to the Special Issue: L2/HL Writing and Technology. *Languages* 8: 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8010001>

Received: 11 November 2022

Accepted: 9 December 2022

Published: 20 December 2022



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1. Instructional Perspectives and Practices

Without a doubt, digital technologies have prompted new communicative practices and areas of scholarly inquiry, supported new instructional formats, and provided opportunities for transforming “the daily communication and learning practices of both students and teachers” (Thorne 2020, p. ix). Even without the pandemic, which increased the use of technology for the purpose of online distance learning, language learning had already been moving toward hybrid and/or flipped-classroom instructional approaches that have adapted multimedia formats. We have witnessed the incorporation of audio, video, text, and other multimedia into the instructional materials of language programs. Online L2 writing instruction is encouraging the examination and evaluation of best teacher training types and pedagogical practices, is helping us think about task type, and is facilitating digital feedback.

The Special Issue begins by addressing training graduate students to incorporate multimodality with Vasseur’s (2021) article titled “Multimodal Approaches to Heritage and Second-Language Instructor Training.” She explores 17 instructors’ conceptualizations of and instructional methodologies for SL2 and Spanish heritage language (SHL) writing and multiliteracies, focusing on the training instructors have received surrounding these pedagogies through a survey. Her findings show that current graduate students who teach both SL2 and SHL learners are neither familiar nor comfortable with defining or teaching multiliteracies and require more training to improve and/or include SL2 and SHL digital writing instruction.

Regarding task types, in their article entitled “The Influence of Writing Instruction on Spanish Heritage Learners in Heritage-Only and Mixed Courses: A Longitudinal Study,” Hurtado and Gastañaga (2021) compare two computer-written essays by 24 Spanish heritage language learners’ (SHLL) enrolled in a newly designed SHL-specific section of a Spanish writing course and mixed SHL/SL2 sections. They also compare the learners’ essays to their discussion forum posts. Hurtado and Gastañaga found that, over a period of one semester, there were no significant differences between the groups in terms of lexical density development, sophistication, diversity, and syntactic complexity and accuracy. In the comparison between the first and second essay, the SHLLs in both section types performed equally well. When comparing essays to forum posts, all SHLLs, regardless of their course section, obtained lower scores on the forum posts than on the essays for all measures except lexical diversity, where they showed the opposite pattern.

Also relating to task type, Torres and Fuentes (2021) article, entitled “Heritage Language Learners’ Lexical Performance across Pair Types and (Non-)Digital Collaborative Writing Task Environments,” also explores how the pair type (16 SHL-SHL and 13 SHL-SL2 pairs) and type of interaction (i.e., face-to-face [FTF] and synchronous, computer-mediated communication (SCMC)) influence advanced learners’ lexical performance on written texts through measures of lexical richness. They found that, based on measures of lexical density, lexical sophistication, and lexical diversity, the SHL-SL2 pairs produced a significantly higher degree of lexical density in their written texts, implying that the SHL-SL2 pairs distinguished between registers more than the SHL-SHL pairs did.

Feedback can be viewed from a more traditional nature (e.g., the use of basic features of Microsoft software, such as underlining or bolding words, or more complex uses such as using track changes and comment boxes) or a more multimodal one due to alternative tools such as Screencast-O-Matic and GoReact (which has been used for years in American Sign Language contexts). In fact, technology has allowed for multimodal feedback integrating both oral and visual modes, while platforms such as Zoom have allowed for synchronous instructor or peer feedback. The articles in this Special Issue also focus attention on the increasingly investigated use of multimodal feedback using multimodal texts (i.e., texts that integrate multiple modes, such as words and images). Valentin-Rivera and Yang’s (2021) article, entitled “The Effects of Digitally Mediated Multimodal Indirect Feedback on Narrations in L2 Spanish Writing: Eye Tracking as a Measure of Noticing,” presents a novel, descriptive study of three SL2 learners utilizing an eye-tracking technique to

understand the impact of indirect corrective feedback (codes accompanied by metalinguistic hints) delivered by two multimodal components: a video tutorial on how to approach teachers' comments and a soundless video displaying individualized teacher feedback. Their findings showed that training on how to approach digital feedback enhanced the rate of revisions, especially for verb and vocabulary-related errors.

This Special Issue also includes a look at the peer review process. Illana-Mahiques' article (Illana-Mahiques 2021), entitled "Re-Thinking Peer Reviewing in the Virtual Context: The Roles of Giving and Receiving Online Feedback in L2 Spanish Classrooms," investigates how 76 SL2 learners from a multi-section, college-level Spanish writing course gave online feedback to their peers. She found that although the most common type of comment was suggestion (followed by praise and empathy comments), the students did not always identify a specific problem. The results also showed that giving online feedback was a significant predictor of students' final scores, whereas receiving online comments did not significantly predict their final essay scores. Thus, the role of the feedback-giver, problem identification (PI), justification (J), and explanation of the praise (EP) comments were significant in predicting the feedback-givers' scores on their own final essay.

2. Multiliteracies and Multilingualism

This Special Issue also includes four articles that explore notions of literacies, which have been defined "as social practices that are fluid, sociocultural, multimodal, and dynamic" (Chen 2013, p. 143) and that are practiced "by individuals as parts of larger groups" (Thorne and Reinhardt 2008, p. 259). This evolving view of literacies accommodates the newness of digital media and encompasses current social practices (Pennycook 2001). Given that multiliteracy instruction emphasizes that the process of composing is grounded in social, historical, and cultural contexts and highlights the agency of the composer (writer, designer), it seems natural for students to explore and master the affordances of various digital tools to create individual and collaborative multimodal texts or artifacts.

Consequently, from a multiliteracies perspective, writing can be understood as "composing" due to the multimodal nature (i.e., the integration of diverse modes, such as written text, visuals, and sound) of the texts currently being created using social tools such as blogs and even Twitter. For instance, an important affordance of digital tools, such as Google Docs, is the possibility for students to work collaboratively on the construction of multimodal texts, even while using two different computers. This Special Issue explores collaboration in Akoto's article (Akoto 2021), entitled "Collaborative Multimodal Writing via Google Docs: Perceptions of French FL Learners." Her article examines seven learners' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of a multimodal writing task in an FFL context and the factors mediating their writing processes. Using a post-task questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and an assessment of finished products, Akoto's findings indicated that the students found collaboration to be a motivating learning experience with perceived benefits, including improvement in writing, genre awareness, and mutual learning via peer assessment.

Another article, written by Maqueda (2022), explores collaboration versus individual writing, and compares different learner populations. The article "Digital Synesthesia in Heritage and Second Language Writing during Collaborative and Individual Digital Storytelling" investigates how eight SHL-SHL pairs and six SL2-SHL pairs developed both collaborative and individual digital stories. Maqueda found that learners followed the tenets of synesthesia, that is, transformation and transduction, more frequently when working collaboratively on digital stories than when working individually. The SHL learners were more successful than the SL2 learners when developing collaborative and individual digital stories.

In connection with multiliteracies and multilingualism, issues of identity and voice construction are also increasingly being investigated; two of the manuscripts in this Special Issue explore these themes. Parra's article, entitled "Strengthening Writing Voices and Identities: Creative Writing, Digital Tools and Artmaking for Spanish Heritage Courses,"

explores four SHLLs' poems and digital art in an advanced SHL course. Parra found that digital multimodal creative writing allowed for meaningful and transformative experiences by encouraging learners to develop voices beyond the constraints of genre by engaging with critical language awareness and by motivating the use of multimodal writing to reach a wider audience.

Echoing Parra's (2021) findings regarding identity, Prada's (2022) article, entitled "Approaching Composition as Telling–Showing Through Translanguaging: Weaving Multilingualism, Multimodality and Multiliteracies in a Digital College *Proyecto Final*", explores 22 learners' digital collages (accompanied by two written narratives) as spaces for identity representation in an SHL composition course. When analyzing the different assignments, Prada explores the processes of digital collage creation and explanation of meaning through students' narratives. His results showed that the use of translanguaging and multimodality represent an important nexus with identity construction.

In sum, this collection of articles has two main aims: (1) to show how researchers and instructors are answering calls for increased integration of technology for instructional and multiliteracies development, which will undoubtedly bring changes to curricular decisions; and (2) to show that languages other than English participate in this effort toward an increasing focus on multiliteracies and multilingualism: seven of the articles explore Spanish as an L2 or HL, one explores FL2, and another explores translanguaging (English and Spanish in contact with each other). Our hope is that readers of this Special Issue recognize and understand how technology is being used across language courses and the impact that technology integration in the classroom has had and, undoubtedly, will continue to have in the future. We long for researchers and instructors to continue exploring these issues in the future as a response to previous calls to focus on multiliteracies instruction as an integral part of the L2/HL learning processes.

Author Contributions: Both authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and development of the special issue, L2/HL Writing and Technology, and its introduction. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank the Women Faculty Writing Program at Texas Tech University for their support and collegiality, and for providing us the space to spend time creating, researching, and collaborating. We would also like to thank all of the authors of this special issue for contributing to the creation of this multilingual context.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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