Review of Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes

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To produce a meaningful text, writers proceed through a series of steps, known as *writing process(es)*. Research into L2 writing processes not only helps us understand L2 writers' physical behaviors (e.g., writing on paper, typing speed, pausing patterns) and their use of linguistic resources (e.g., knowledge of grammar and vocabulary) but also "the nature and temporal distribution of underlying cognitive operations" like planning, generating ideas, organizing the flow of information, and revising (Michel *et al.*, 2021, p. 67). Because writing processes include multifaceted cognitive activities, L2 writing processes research sheds new multidimensional insights on the link between writing processes and language learning. The volume titled *Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes*, edited by prolific L2 writing researchers Rosa Manchón and Julio Roca de Larios, highlights major theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, emerging research trends, and key considerations regarding the conceptualization and investigation of L2 writing processes*.*

Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes is clearly organized, with 16 chapters arranged in three parts. Part I is an overview of L2 writing processes and lays the foundation for the volume. Part II presents a selection of suitable instruments that are used to examine L2 writing processes. It also describes analytical procedures in detail and offers practical tips for implementing various traditional and emerging research instruments that are usually employed in L2 writing process research. Part III offers a critical reflection on these research instruments, as well as methodological decisions that draw on studies the authors previously published.

Part I consists of three chapters and provides the rationale for creating this edited volume. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the importance of theoretical models of writing processes, including plausible research designs, and valid as well as reliable instruments to investigate L2 writing processes. After all, a research design and its instruments will make or break the generalizability of any study's findings. In response to the first two chapters, Chapter 3 discusses the pros and cons of interventionist (aka *experimental*) and naturalistic (aka *non-interventionist*) research designs and lists numerous potential concerns that researchers may encounter when investigating L2 writing processes (e.g., differences in study populations, creating or adapting tasks). In sum, Part I aims to explain theoretical frameworks for and approaches to the investigation of L2 writing processes.

Part II provides in-depth information about some of the commonly used research instruments and describes analytical procedures regarding traditional techniques (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, etc.) and their more emerging alternatives (e.g., eye-tracking, keystroke logging). It also offers practical tips on how to use these techniques in researching the L2 writing process. Chapter 4 provides an overview of key considerations in using self-report instruments (e.g., questionnaires, interviews and process logs) to examine writing processes. Chapters 5 and 6

complement and expand upon one another, providing a fuller understanding of verbally mediated data. Chapter 5 focuses on oral verbalization (e.g., think-aloud protocols, stimulated recalls), while Chapter 6 introduces viable options regarding written verbalizations (e.g., diaries, written reflections). The major takeaway from this part is how the contributors describe various types of research instruments and discuss the kinds of research questions each instrument is well-suited to answer. To this end, they provide examples drawn from various representative empirical studies.

While Part II describes and critically evaluates diverse data collection instruments and procedures, Part III takes the information in the previous part one step farther by providing the implementation of the instruments in empirical research. For example, Part II describes screen capture (Chapter 7), keystroke logging (Chapter 8) and eye-tracking (Chapter 9) technologies as data-collection instruments to directly observe writing activities (e.g., by capturing minute-to-minute writing actions at the point of inscription). The chapters in Part III offer critical discussions of research design issues, methodological decisions, analytical procedures, data-collection challenges, and workable solutions on the implementation of the instruments illustrated in Part II. That is, Parts II and III complement each other.

Furthermore, the contributing authors for the chapters in Part II and Part III assert that the analysis associated with L2 writing processes will benefit greatly from triangulation with other sources of data. As noted by Séror and Gentil in Chapter 7, even though screen capturing technologies (e.g., record everything that occurs on a writer's screen) will "unobtrusively capture the elusive details of the composing process" (p. 146), this data could be corroborated with either concurrent or retrospective verbal protocols to better understand writing processes. For example, in Chapter 12, Guggenbicher, Eberharter and Kremmel illustrate the implementation of three methods: eye-tracking, keystroke logging and stimulated verbal recalls used in two different research projects. In a similar fashion, Chapter 13 contributors Pacheco and Smith describe the methodological challenges in combining multimodal timescapes (via a screen-capture software program) and retrospective interviews in a study that examined digital multimodal composition produced by eighth grade schoolchildren in the US. One commonality among the chapters listed in Part III is that in addition to gathering quantitative data, researchers investigating L2 writing processes are encouraged to obtain verbal reports because this technique can furnish researchers with more comprehensive data about L2 writers' emic perspective (Davoodifard, 2022). The importance of triangulation was also asserted by Charlene Polio (in the *Afterword* chapter), who stated that "there is no one-size-fits-all method and that no method can fully capture any participant's process, no matter the writing prompt, context, or person" (p. 365).

The edited volume has a number of strengths. First, this volume highlights methodological concerns and data-collection challenges around L2 writing process research and offers viable solutions for addressing those concerns. In addition, the majority of chapters (in Parts II and III) suggest avenues for future research by providing justifications for using various methods, provide a rationale for why and when a particular method is appropriate, illustrate the type of research questions that can be addressed by either quantitative or qualitative research designs, and describe the pros and cons of traditional and emerging tools for observing a writing activity. Third, the edited volume balances the representation of studies involving adults and children, or levels from schoolchildren to university students, including data regarding advanced to low-proficiency learners of English. Fourth, the research procedures in the volume are illustrated by using different visualization schemes, in the forms of colorful (flow)charts or tables and graphs, to facilitate the comprehension of the basic steps taken during data collection and analysis (see Chapters 11 and 14 for examples).

Although the strengths of the book are undeniable, the volume's content could be more comprehensive and appeal more broadly to both researcher as well as teacher-educator audiences if it incorporated in-situ studies (e.g., independent writing research) and case studies. It should be pointed out that writing processes are also affected by environmental and social factors since student writers may seek assistance from peers outside of class, or family members, tutors, or digital/AI tools (e.g., Google translate, Grammarly). Thus, all of these factors do affect (digital) text composition. Also, all the chapters contributed to the volume focus on English. It is important to conduct research on languages other than English, "particularly

those languages where there is some theoretically motivated reason to expect that a writing system might affect the results" (Leow *et al.*, 2022, p. 318).

Despite the minor issues discussed above, *Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes* should be informative for at least three groups of audiences: seasoned researchers, novice researchers and teacher educators. Some useful pedagogically-relevant ideas can be gathered from the volume. Writing teachers can help their students develop as writers by pedagogical intervention using the data collection instruments, analytical procedures and classroom-based measurements discussed in the volume (especially in Part III). The volume should be insightful for novice and seasoned researchers interested in L2 writing studies. The chapters do not merely introduce a research tool but offer practical tips and troubleshooting guides for how the tool works for L2 process writing purposes. Not only do the contributing authors describe emerging technologies and techniques with ample visuals, they also provide research questions that can be addressed by use of these techniques.

In sum, this volume is a great addition to the previously published literature (e.g., Manchón & Polio, 2021) that aimed to explore key methodological developments and empirical findings focused on L2 writing processes. The significant contribution of *Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes* by Rosa M. Manchón and Julio Roca de Larios (2022) is that the entire volume entails discussions that systematically address methodological decisions, research design issues, affordances of diverse data collection instruments, analytical procedures, and challenges regarding data analysis in the area of L2 writing process research. In addition to illustrating certain research instruments that lend themselves better to cognitively-oriented studies, the volume also highlights emerging trends and forecasts the trajectory of the area of L2 writing process research. Specifically, each chapter indicates avenues for future research that may facilitate graduate-level students in L1/L2 writing programs to find dissertation or thesis topics to advance this important scholarship.

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