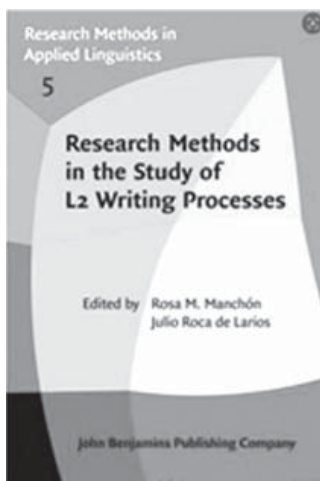


In Demand for Multi-method and Interdisciplinary Research in L2 Writing: Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes

Reviewed by Smith Khan



Manchón, R.M., & Roca de Larios, J. (Eds). (2023). *Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes*. John Benjamins. pp. 393, ISBN: 978-9027214102, e-Book ISBN: 9789027249487, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/rmal.5>

Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes attempts to fulfil the gap between writing processes and writing learning through different theoretical frameworks, methodologies, research trends in writing, and the investigation of L2 (EFL/ESL) writing processes. Any writers produce writing materials through linear and non-linear writing processes. In the past linearity was entertained, but the trend has come under massive criticism. Latest scholarship on writing processes or process-based writing remains focused on the physical characteristic to be displayed by L2 writers, such as typing, pausing patterns, handwriting, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and many more. Davoodifard (2022) demanded a strong investigation about the “writing behaviors and underlying cognitive mechanisms using innovative types of assessment” instead of relying on high-stakes test to identify mechanisms for L2 writing improvement (p. 17). Two editors, Rosa M. Manchón and Julio Roca de Larios from University of Murcia have edited and collated 16 chapters under three themes. Their book is a beautiful compilation of new perspectives on the connection between mother tongue and language acquisition during the writing process. This book extensively touches on the relativity of feedback on written drafts, and the ways to make writing processes more effective through data obtained through questionnaires, diaries, digital recording, interviews, and ethnographic notes. The book also gives a historical taste by elucidating the progress research methods in writing have undergone. This book necessitates big guidance for new researchers, students, and educators to familiarize themselves with the effective writing processes in the ESL and EFL contexts.

The second section uses a variety of data collection techniques to show how these principles are operationalized building on the theoretical and methodological insights of the first section. This book organizes 16 chapters under three themes—writing processes, affordances of data

collection, and data analysis procedures. The first theme deals with how writers struggle with the complex nuances of writing processes and the methodological procedures on written corrective feedback processing. Feedback has become instrumental in the improvement of writing in EFL/ESL contexts. Bhowmik (2021) stated “Much research in L2 writing following this paradigm has focused on feedback practices: how feedback on writing contributes to the improvement of L2 texts, and by implication, L2 development” (p. 33). As this theme contains three chapters, the first chapter is an introductory note. However, chapters 1 and 2 advocate the rationale behind gaining deeper insight into theoretical principles of writing processes so that the gap between theories and the feasibility of research designs is narrowed. They also discuss the validity and reliability of some research instruments to look into writing procedures in the L2 context. Chapter 3 brings to the forth some research complications that a researcher may confront during his or her investigation of L2 writing processes, such as dissimilarities in the research size. On the whole, the first theme or section of the book sheds light on theoretical frameworks and suitable approaches to researching L2 writing production.

The third part of the article expands on the second part by discussing the tools that researchers can use the difficulties that researchers encounter and the ensuing methodological choices. Similarly, the second theme elaborates on the ways to collect data from different techniques such as surveying, written verbalization, keystroke logging, and eye tracking. This section offers guidance on using traditional and the latest research tools in the L2 writing situations. Finally, the last theme focuses its attention on generation of writing goals, researching writers’ cognitive processes, opportunities and challenges of using multimodality, and analysis of synchronous and asynchronous written corrective feedback.

The second theme or section of the book discloses some common research instruments and the latest ones. Surveys, interviews, recordings, etc. are traditional ways to elicit information from research subjects, but eye-tracking, keystroke logging, etc. is an emerging tool. Chapter 4 is all about how traditional research instruments help researchers investigate writing processes. Moving further, chapters 5 and 6 extend beyond what chapter 4 does. Chapters 5 and 6 tell us how verbally mediated data is obtained and analyzed. Verbally mediated data are raw and the most original information that has ever emanated from research subjects or populations. Chapter 5 is concerned with oral verbalization and Chapter 6 is about written verbalizations such as diaries, written reflections, journal writing, etc. This technique reveals people’s internal thinking patterns. In psychology, it is metacognitive.

The last theme or section of the book provides us with critical discussions about issues relating to research design at the early stage, selection of feasible research methodologies, analytical tools, data collection obstacles, and doable wayouts. There is a close connection between section 2 and section 3. The subsequent chapters of the last section offer information about emerging instruments such as eye-tracking, simulated verbal calls, etc. that are new to many researchers and students. Chapter 13 finds difficulties paring multimodal timescapes and retrospective interviews in research undertaken by Pacheco and Smith in a U.S. middle school. I would call a concluding chapter “Afterword,” where Charlene Polio from Michigan State University, rightly

asserts “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). Based on the timeframe, urgency, sampling size, research site, and many aspects, a researcher has to conduct research, selecting the most suitable things from his or her repertoire. Whenever we do research, no tools or instruments or methods work perfectly. Our effort is to go as close to the truth as possible. There is always room for improvement.

These three parts, when combined provide a logical flow from conceptual foundation to useful tools to methodological reflections. The book is particularly readable by readers at various research stages because of its structural flow. This volume has countless strengths. The book aims at global audiences. The research viewpoints shared in the volume come from authors from different continents. So, the book entails the motto “All in one.” Different contexts are merged into a single place. Second, the volume offers expert advice on what to use, what to include, what to avoid, and how to resolve it. It is a proper juxtaposition of issues and solutions. Third, the book seems to promote process-based learning. It lays emphasis on how students engage in planning, organizing, reasoning, revising, editing, drafting, etc. ahead of turning in polished and standard texts. Process-based writing, as argued by Sherma (2024), is daunting because the organization of ideas, precision of language and typical word choice is directly linked with the mastery of writing skills in EFL contexts.

This is a latest consideration in writing in L2 contexts. Fourth, the volume includes both black and white and color illustrations such as tables, flow charts, and figures that have the powerful potential to enhance readers’ understanding of the content being delivered. Moreover, Alister Cumming from University of Toronto, in his foreword, makes it clear that this volume “will be an essential guide for novice and experienced researchers, senior students, and educators investigating the processes of writing in additional languages” (p. 1). Finally, extending the fourth strength that the academic language of this book is lucid and easy to understand for readers.

The volume has some limitations in spite of these contributions. There are still some unanswered questions because the emphasis on technological advancements occasionally obscures the usefulness of classroom-based research. One of the chapters talks about Screen Capture Technology (SCT) in relation with “out-of-class writing practices and emotions in writing or the study of writers’ management of multilingual, multimodal and AI resources” (p. 21). However, there is a dearth of detailed examples of other popular apps such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Canva, Grammarly, and ChatGPT, and so on. Nearly one quarter of the book’s content discusses various types of research methodology, yet we hardly find any details about mixed methods, designs and practical ideas. For researchers operating in under-resourced environments where access to such tools is restricted the strong emphasis on technologically sophisticated tools like eye-tracking and keystroke logging may not always be practical. Additionally, the volume occasionally sacrifices pedagogical applications due to its strong methodological focus. The discussion might seem a little abstract to readers seeking more classroom-oriented tactics or links between research findings and standard teaching procedures. Finally, despite the books

global reach most of the examples focus on academic environments with ample resources leaving multilingual classrooms in the Global South—where L2 writing difficulties frequently vary greatly—less represented. By addressing these topics, the book’s inclusivity and practical relevance would have increased.

Owing to these suggestions, we cannot undermine the degree to which *Research Methods in the Study of L2 Writing Processes* supplies with information. The book is intended for new researchers, teacher educators, and sometime researchers. The volume also proves to be useful to experienced researchers, for new research instruments, for example, eye tracking, keystroke logging, and stimulated recalls, are new key concepts in the study of writing.

To sum up, this collection emphasizes the idea that L2 writing process research has undergone some changes. There is a new demand for multi-method and interdisciplinary domains. It has been felt strongly that more reflections on research methods, classroom-related practices, and the inclusion of innovative technology such multimodal in terms of L2 writing processes are necessary to enhance writing of English as a second or foreign language. Regardless of possible weaknesses, the volume strongly presents authentic research prompts, coding schemes, ethical considerations and methodological challenges. Each chapter equally offers research avenues. One of the good books to grab for research on writing processes in the ESL or ESL context.

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