

Book Review

Qin, J., & Stapleton, P. (Eds.). (2022). *Technology in second language writing: Advances in composing, translation, writing pedagogy and data-driven learning*.

Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003279358>

Reviewed by Muhammed Parviz, and Masoud Azizi

Overview of the Book

Recent technological advancements have significantly transformed language education, particularly in the realm of writing, a skill known for its complexity, especially for second language (L2) learners (Hyland, 2021). The digital age has reshaped the writing landscape through various technologies, highlighting a heightened emphasis on integrating technology into L2 writing instruction and research. An up-to-date publication titled *Technology in Second Language Writing: Advances in Composing, Translation, Writing Pedagogy, and Data-Driven Learning*, edited by Jingjing Qin and Paul Stapleton, aptly illustrates how the L2 writing domain is embracing technology to educate and study students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Part of the Routledge Research in Language Education series, this insightful volume delves into the evolving integration of technology in L2 writing, serving as a vital resource for scholars, postgraduate students, and practitioners in language teaching, Applied Linguistics, and TESOL. With 11 chapters, the book offers a comprehensive exploration of technological advancements in L2 writing instruction and research. Topics covered include machine translation, electronic feedback, wiki writing, multimodal resemiotization, social networking, corpus analysis, text recognition, and keystroke logging. These chapters collectively assess the effectiveness of various technological tools and their impact on teaching and research in the field of L2 writing.

Chapter Summaries and Critique

Introduction: Advances in Writing Technology Over the Eons (Paul Stapleton)

The opening chapter provides a comprehensive historical overview of the evolution of writing technologies, setting the stage for the book's exploration of contemporary advances. Stapleton contextualizes the current technological landscape in language education within a broader historical perspective. While this approach offers depth, it could have included more emphasis on the pedagogical implications and potential drawbacks of these advancements to create a balanced perspective.

Chapter 2: Interactive Academic EFL Writing Assisted by GT for Chinese Non-English Major Students (Shu-Chiao Tsai)

Tsai's study highlights the interactive use of Google Translate (GT) among Chinese non-English major students and its impact on academic writing. The chapter provides practical insights but could be critiqued for its narrow focus on GT without considering other machine translation (MT) tools. Furthermore, while the study emphasizes benefits, it lacks sufficient discussion on how GT may perpetuate errors or dependency, which are critical for educators to understand.

Chapter 3: The Use of Google Translate and Complementary Resources by Chinese Students: A Case Study Writing in Catalan (Ruocheng Ning)

This chapter provides a nuanced analysis of Chinese students using GT and other resources while writing in Catalan. The research highlights the multilingual dynamics at play and shows the affordances and constraints of machine translation in multilingual composition. Ning's focus on a less commonly taught language offers a fresh perspective; however, the sample size and contextual limitations raise questions about the generalizability of the findings. A critical perspective might explore how cultural and linguistic differences in using MT tools can impact broader second language acquisition.

Chapter 4: Using Machine Translation in EFL Writing: A Scoping Review (Burcu Gokgoz-Kurt)

Gokgoz-Kurt provides a scoping review of machine translation (MT) in EFL writing, synthesizing research findings to identify trends, benefits, and challenges associated with MT usage. The chapter presents a balanced view of how MT can support or hinder the development of writing skills in L2 learners. While the review is methodologically robust and provides a well-organized summary of existing literature, it could have further critiqued the limitations of MT applications. For instance, the lack of attention to ethical considerations, such as plagiarism risks and academic integrity, weakens the overall argument.

Chapter 5: Repeated Academic Writing with Synchronous and Asynchronous Teacher Electronic Feedback: How Are Macro and Micro Aspects Affected? (Sima Khezrlou)

Khezrlou investigates the impact of synchronous and asynchronous electronic feedback on student writing, focusing on macro (e.g., organization) and micro (e.g., grammar) aspects. The chapter provides insights into the effectiveness of different feedback methods in enhancing the quality of student writing. The study's strength lies in its longitudinal design and nuanced differentiation between feedback types. However, the chapter could be critiqued for insufficiently addressing the technological challenges students face, such as platform limitations or digital literacy issues, which influence how feedback is received and integrated.

Chapter 6: Wiki Writing in Medicine and Students' Perceptions: The Case of an English-in-the-Discipline Course in Hong Kong (Wenfeng Wang et al.)

This chapter examines the use of wiki writing in a medical English course, exploring how collaborative digital writing technologies influence students' learning experiences and perceptions. The study emphasizes the potential of wiki writing for fostering collaboration and discipline-specific language skills. However, the reliance on students' self-reported perceptions limits the chapter's empirical rigor. A more critical approach might have involved analyzing the quality of students' contributions or evaluating learning outcomes beyond their subjective experience.

Chapter 7: Multimodal Resemiotization: Examining One L2 Writer's Interactions with Equity Videos (Emma R. Britton et al.)

Britton and her co-authors explore the concept of multimodal resemiotization, focusing on an L2 learner's engagement with equity-themed videos. This chapter underscores the importance of multimodal approaches in L2 writing, demonstrating how learners use various semiotic resources to construct meaning. It also offers a rich, detailed case study; however, its singular focus might not fully capture the diversity of multimodal writing experiences across different learners. Expanding the scope to include multiple participants could provide a broader and more generalizable understanding.

Chapter 8: The Dialogical Conception of Beginning L2 Writing via Social Networking and Telecollaboration (Maria Bondarenko and Liudmila Klimanova)

Bondarenko and Klimanova explore how social networking platforms and telecollaboration shape beginning L2 writing development. The chapter shows how digital environments facilitate intercultural exchange and collaborative writing, offering a rich context for the development of writing skills. While the chapter shows the potential of collaborative technologies, it lacks sufficient critical analysis of the challenges such as communication breakdowns or unequal participation. A deeper investigation into these issues would enrich the discussion of the dialogical approach.

Chapter 9: Examining Directness with Corpus Tools in Iraqi EFL Writing (Ashleigh Cox et al.)

This chapter uses corpus analysis to examine directness in Iraqi EFL writing, providing valuable insights into cultural variations in communication styles. This chapter highlights how corpus tools can be used to understand L2 writing patterns and the cultural influences that shape writing practices. However, it would benefit from a discussion on the limitations of corpus tools in capturing the nuance of human communication and context. Such a critique would highlight the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative methods in such research.

Chapter 10: L2 Handwritten Assignments for Automated Writing Evaluation: A Text Recognition Study (Vahid Abolghasemi and Reza Falahati)

Abolghasemi and Falahati examine the use of automated writing evaluation for handwritten assignments, focusing on the application of text recognition technology. The chapter addresses the challenges of implementing such technologies and suggests improvements for enhancing accuracy and pedagogical relevance. The study's technical approach is innovative, but the chapter could have critiqued the accessibility and accuracy of such technologies, particularly for diverse populations of learners. The authors might have also addressed how the integration of this technology impacts teacher workload and feedback quality.

Chapter 11: Using Computer Keystroke Logging in the Second Language Composition Classroom (Hampus Holm et al.)

The final chapter investigates the use of keystroke logging to analyze the writing process in L2 classrooms. Holm and his co-authors present keystroke data as a valuable tool for understanding how L2 writers develop skills and make decisions during composition, emphasizing its potential for process-oriented teaching. While the data-driven approach offers new insights, the chapter might be critiqued for not adequately addressing the ethical concerns of monitoring students' typing patterns. Additionally, there is limited discussion on how to implement such technology effectively in diverse classroom settings.

Critical Perspectives

While *Technology in Second Language Writing: Advances in Composing, Translation, Writing Pedagogy and Data-Driven Learning* offers a comprehensive examination of technological tools in L2 writing pedagogy, several critical perspectives highlight the volume's strengths and limitations:

1. Comprehensive Coverage but Fragmented Organization

The book covers an impressive range of technologies and writing practices, making it a valuable resource for educators and researchers. However, the chapters often appear as isolated case studies, lacking cohesion in how these technologies might be integrated into a unified

pedagogical framework. A concluding chapter synthesizing these approaches could provide a more coherent understanding of the technologies' collective impact.

2. Methodological Inconsistencies

The diversity in methodologies-ranging from case studies to corpus analysis and scoping reviews-adds richness but also creates inconsistencies. Readers may find it difficult to compare findings across studies due to varying research designs and analytical frameworks. A more standardized methodological approach or a meta-analysis of the studies would enhance the book's utility.

3. Limited Generalizability

While the book includes studies from a range of geographical and cultural contexts, the findings are primarily based on specific linguistic and cultural groups such as Chinese and Iraqi EFL students. This limits the applicability of the results to broader L2 learning contexts. Expanding the geographical and cultural scope to include underrepresented regions would provide a more comprehensive picture of the global implications of technology in L2 writing.

4. Lack of Ethical Considerations

While the chapters provide in-depth analyses of various digital tools, the book pays limited attention to the ethical implications of technology use in L2 writing classrooms. For instance, Chapter 4 does not adequately address issues such as plagiarism risks and academic integrity. Similarly, the discussions on keystroke logging and automated evaluation in Chapter 11 lack a critical perspective on data privacy, surveillance, and the biases that may be embedded in these systems. A chapter dedicated to the ethical challenges associated with integrating technology into writing pedagogy would offer a more balanced view.

5. Insufficient Practical Applications for Educators

Some chapters, such as those on MT and wiki writing, offer practical insights for classroom implementation, but others remain theoretical or exploratory. To enhance the book's value for practitioners, it could include more detailed guidelines or strategies for using these technologies in diverse instructional settings, particularly for less commonly utilized tools such as text recognition and corpus analysis.

6. Generative Artificial Intelligence

While this book offers valuable insights into the role of technology in L2 writing, it falls short of examining the effects of recent technological innovations such as Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT), on L2 writing challenges. Aside from a brief mention of new functionalities of Google Translate in relation to L2 writing, the volume does not delve into the application of emerging AI tools and their implications for L2 writing instruction and research. Given the rapid advancement of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), there is substantial potential for these innovative tools to be increasingly adopted in language education. As a result, tools such as ChatGPT could have a considerable influence on both first language (L1) and L2 writing within educational and research contexts. It is expected that the exploration of how to incorporate and integrate this next-generation AI technology into L2 writing will emerge as a significant global topic in the near future.

7. Limited Focus on Future Research Directions

The book presents numerous current advancements but would benefit from a dedicated section on future research directions. Highlighting gaps in the field and suggesting areas for further

study would provide researchers with a clearer roadmap for building upon the insights presented in the volume.

Overall, *Technology in Second Language Writing: Advances in Composing, Translation, Writing Pedagogy and Data-Driven Learning* is a timely and informative collection that highlights the diverse ways technology influences L2 writing. Despite some limitations such as a lack of cohesion across chapters and insufficient ethical consideration, the book provides valuable insights into how digital tools can be integrated into L2 writing pedagogy. Its comprehensive approach makes it a significant contribution to the field, serving as a foundation for future exploration and development in L2 writing instruction.

Reference

Hyland, K. (2021). Second language writing instruction. In H. Mohebbi, & C. Coombe (Eds.), *Research Questions in Language Education and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 129-132). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79143-8_24.

Biodata

Dr. Muhammed Parviz is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Imam Ali University in Tehran, Iran. His research interests focus on second language writing, text analysis, artificial intelligence (AI) technology and its applications in language learning and teaching, corpus linguistics, and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). He has published extensively in (inter)national peer-reviewed journals, sharing his expertise in areas such as AI-assisted L2 writing, the use of corpora in language studies, and the application of SFL frameworks to analyze language use and development. His work aims to bridge the gap between technological advancements and second language acquisition, exploring how AI can be leveraged to enhance language learning and teaching practices.

Dr. Masoud Azizi is an Assistant Professor at Amirkabir University of Technology, specializing in Applied Linguistics. He earned his B.A. in English Translation and M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Tehran, culminating in a Ph.D. in the same field in 2013. Dr. Azizi has published several books and journal articles, focusing on language education and assessment. He is also pursuing additional degrees in Law and Family Counseling, reflecting his diverse academic interests and commitment to interdisciplinary studies.