

From the Guest Editors

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Connections Between Second Language Reading and Writing

While there has been extensive research on second language (L2) reading, and nearly as much research on second language writing, far less has been studied about the ways the two skills are related. Since the 1990s, interest in linking the two second language literacy skills has increased with the help of meaningful perspectives proposed by L2 researchers, beginning with Carson and Leki (1993). There seems a consensus among researchers that reading and writing mutually support the development of literacy (Grabe, 2003), and thus it is more effective when the two skills are taught together (Grabe, 2001).

Despite the appeal of the idea, little empirical evidence has yet shown whether it can in fact result in greater L2 improvement than teaching the two literacy skills separately (Grabe, 2001). Hudson (2007) notes that one of the reasons may be that the L2 reading and writing connection is complicated and intertwined in nature. In addition, the variety of L2 contexts (e.g., ESL, EFL, EAP) appears to be another reason that makes difficult to clearly establish how the reading and writing integration enhances L2 learning (Grabe, 2001). Although L2 educators and researchers (e.g., Belcher & Hirvela, 2001; Hirvela, 2004; Grabe, 2001) have long advocated the importance of reading and writing integration, it is still common for reading and writing skills to be taught separately, particularly in English for academic purposes programs.

What forms of reading to use and how to link reading with writing through instruction are still under investigation. Grabe and Zhang (2013) argue that EAP students need to read extensively along with constant reading and writing practice to build confidence and fluency in L2. They further point out that one of the challenges EAP students face results from their lack of experience integrating reading and writing skills for academic purposes. To better support L2 learners in developing experience, therefore, we need more research not only to examine the complex nature of the link between the two literacies (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004) but also to add depth to the synergistic relationship they may have (Hirvela, 2004).

The purpose of this special issue of *Reading in a Foreign Language* is to present new voices and new angles to the investigation of the links between reading and writing. The six articles included here represent a range of approaches to this topic, studying reading and writing in a variety of contexts with students of differing backgrounds and language proficiency levels.

Two articles focus on adding reading interventions to language classes and evaluating the impact of those interventions on L2 college students' writing. Aaron Mermelstein explores whether the

addition of an enhanced extensive reading program can result in Taiwanese EFL learners' writing improvement. The findings of this study contribute to deepening our understanding of the potential role and benefits of extensive reading in facilitating writing development. Priscila Leal then examines how a group of Japanese English learners studying in the United States improved their writing through an intensive focus on fairytales. Her research suggests that children's literature can have a positive impact on adult language learners' reading and writing development.

The next three articles consider the effects of integrated reading and writing instruction on students' abilities to write from and with sources. In a study of Chinese university students studying in the United States, Ruilan Zhao and Alan Hirvela discuss how understanding of synthesis of source texts can affect students' synthesis writing and their perceptions toward the reading and writing connection, which shows the value of teaching synthesis writing in a university composition course in preparing students to compose academic papers. Examining the same literacy practices with younger learners, Hyonsuk Cho and Janina Brutt-Griffler discuss the effectiveness of integrated reading and writing instruction in enhancing Korean school-age EFL students' language improvement, more specifically reading comprehension and summary writing abilities. They found that all the students wanted to have more writing instruction; a short intervention improved intermediate and advanced students' writing. With a contribution that describes an innovative collaborative practice at a Canadian university, Leora Freedman presents the idea of using *Close Reading* as a pedagogic strategy in helping students read critically and gain a deeper understanding of the text. She further describes how this approach can assist students in generating written arguments.

The final article draws on classroom observation and audio data to examine connections between education policy and instructional practice. Betsy Gilliland's analysis of literacy instruction in a mainstream American high school classroom reveals how high-stakes testing and education policy limit English learners' opportunities to develop reading and writing skills for academic purposes.

All six articles in this special issue help flesh out the gaps noted by scholars with respect to our limited understandings of both how L2 reading and writing work together and how teachers can integrate the two skills in the classroom to help learners' overall language and literacy development. We hope that this special issue inspires other researchers and teachers to consider ways that they can add to this growing body of knowledge, particularly with respect to reading and writing in languages other than English.

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