

Article

# Multimodal Approaches for Heritage and Second Language Instructor Training

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**Abstract:** This piece explores the need to provide better training to graduate student instructors by first conducting a needs analysis of current graduate students and recent graduate students regarding their conceptualizations of writing, multiliteracies, and second (L2) and heritage language (HL) pedagogies. Based on this survey, it is evident that with just one teaching methods course as the typical training graduate student instructors receive it behooves us to implement innovative pedagogy in other ways to develop graduate students' abilities to navigate new technological tools and reconsider how they can teach writing in the L2/HL courses. Based on previous research as well as practical experience, this paper discusses several approaches for training and preparing graduate students to reconsider their preconceived notions of what it means to learn to write in an L2 or HL to include more focus on multiliteracies and technological skills to prepare students for 21st century communication.

**Keywords:** graduate student training; second language writing; heritage language writing; Spanish as a heritage language; Spanish as a second language; multiliteracies



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## 1. Introduction

As computers and the Internet permit users to communicate, receive, and produce information for learning, work, and play in new ways, scholars have begun to re-examine the concept of literacy (Ware et al. 2016). Literacy is no longer just the ability to read and write paper-based texts (Li and Storch 2017; Ware et al. 2016). Rather, computer-mediated communication (CMC) and Web 2.0 technologies have brought forth a broader conceptualization of the concept. Literacy is now referred to with terms such as literacies, multiliteracies, or even electronic literacies (Cope and Kalantzis 1999; New London Group 1996; Ware et al. 2016; Warschauer 1999, 2003). Regardless of the terminology used, the skills, knowledge, and practices required are distinct to those before CMC.

Multiliteracies, defined here according to Kern's (2000) seven principles of literacy as involving: interpretation, collaboration, the conventions of reading and writing, cultural knowledge, problem solving, reflection and self-reflection, and language use. These principles have been a central focus of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as demonstrated in the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning (the 5 Cs: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) underpinning language learning (The National Standards Collaborative Board 2015). To expand and adapt the literacy skills students were acquiring, ACTFL collaborated with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) to develop the 21st Century Skills Map, which combines the goals of the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning with 21st Century Skills, with the goal that students could employ their language skills in contexts beyond the classroom. This partnership created two overarching goal areas: (1) information, media, and technology skills; and (2) life and career skills. Both skill areas empowered students with new literacies. The first area, called, "information, media, and technology skills" (p. 9) specifically focused on communication, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, information literacy, media literacy, and technology literacy skills.

The second set, while still incorporating literacies skills, is known as, “life and career skills” (p. 15). Specifically, P21 and ACTFL named flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility are essential in this group ([Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2011](#)).

As the importance of writing or composing (considering the myriad text types created in the digital world) grows, the lack of research informing L2 writing instruction, the disconnect between L2 writing theory and L2 writing instructional norms, and the dearth of research investigating how L2 writing is taught becomes exceedingly obvious ([Allen and Paesani 2020](#); [Byrnes et al. 2010](#); [Lefkowitz 2011](#)).

### 1.1. *Writing in the L2 and Heritage Language Classroom*

As writing becomes ubiquitous in daily life, it can no longer be relegated as a skill just to practice grammar and vocabulary ([Hubert and Bonzo 2019](#)). Rather, it is being called into focus as a central skill for communication and literacies in the 21st century. Writing skills have become even more relevant in everyday communication due largely to social media and personal, handheld devices ([Kalantzis et al. 2016](#)). However, despite the importance of writing to assist learners in developing their abilities to think and articulate their ideas and feelings and make them comprehensible to those who may not share the same background ([Kern 2000](#)), L2 writing still holds a less important position in L2 curricula ([Allen 2018](#)). In addition to many L2 instructors believing writing skills to be less important than other skills ([Valdes et al. 1992](#)), others believe that L1 writing skills will transfer to the L2 ([O'Donnell 2007](#)); still others believe that L2 writing skills are something students can acquire after they master L2 oral communication and reading ([Racelis and Matsuda 2013](#)). Furthermore, when writing *is* included in the L2 curriculum, the focus is often as a support skill ([Hubert 2014](#)); that is, emphasis is placed on linguistic accuracy where the focus is writing to learn, rather than learning to write, whose focus would be more centralized on genre, audience, or style ([Hubert and Bonzo 2019](#); [O'Donnell 2007](#); [Vyatkina 2011](#)).

Increasing the difficulty of teaching L2 and HL writing is that students arrive in our classrooms with myriad backgrounds of L2 knowledge, ranging from heritage speakers who are simultaneous bilinguals to true L2 learner beginners. Although research on L2 and HL writing is somewhat limited, there is clear data showing distinct needs of Heritage Language learners (HLL) and L2 users ([Beaudrie 2012](#); [Elola 2018](#); [Elola and Mikulski 2016](#)) and that one group benefits more than the other with certain pedagogical interventions (e.g., [Giglio-Henshaw 2013](#)). Therefore, specific pedagogical strategies should be implemented for different groups of students.

### 1.2. *Graduate Student Training*

Unfortunately, it seems many of those responsible for teaching L2 and HL writing are not familiar with best practices for writing instruction ([Hubert and Bonzo 2019](#)). Despite calls to teach additional skills to develop learners who are multiliterate and who are able to use the L2 in a wide variety of contexts ([Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2011](#)), traditional writing and practices continue to have a stronghold in the field ([Lefkowitz 2011](#)). [Hubert and Bonzo \(2019\)](#) have suggested the chasm between L2 writing pedagogical practices and research and theory may be due in part to the professoriate who typically teaches L2/HL writing courses. They suggested these faculty are not typically those who are researching L2 and HL writing, rather, they are L2 literature and cultural studies scholars.

If the courses are not writing-specific and are first- and second-year language courses, it is likely they are taught by graduate students since over half of first-year language courses at U.S. doctoral-granting institutions are taught by graduate students ([Modern Language Association 2007](#)). These instructors represent future language instructors across all levels of instruction and are, therefore, an important population to receive training and best practices for instruction. Typically, however, graduate student training relies on a one-semester teaching methods course taken during students' first semester of a graduate program ([Crane et al. 2011](#)).

Unfortunately, the teaching methods course does not usually cover competencies specific to teaching HL users, who, as briefly mentioned, have linguistic and affective needs distinct from their L2 peers (Potowski and Carreira 2004). The methods course also does not typically cover L2 writing instruction in a way that graduate students recall and can subsequently apply this knowledge to the courses they teach (Mikulski et al. 2019), therefore, leading to ineffective, or a lack of L2/HL writing instruction in the courses they teach. Rankin and Becker (2006) have suggested that their lack of recall may be because the amount of information covered in the methods course is too much for them to process while simultaneously teaching language for the first time.

Supporting this idea, of the ten faculty members participating in Hubert and Bonzo's (2019) study surveying university faculty responsible for first- and second- year language instruction's knowledge about current L2 writing research, eight held degrees related to second language acquisition (SLA), applied linguistics, or linguistics; two held degrees in L2 literature and reported not having formal pedagogical training. Despite 80 percent of respondents having deep knowledge of applied linguistics and SLA, the participants showed extremely low levels of L2 writing theory and indicated receiving very little (if any) information on L2 writing instruction during their graduate training. In a larger study by Mikulski et al. (2019), half of the 56 instructors who responded said they had not received pedagogical training on how to teach writing for L2 or HL users of Spanish.

### 1.3. Spanish as a Heritage Language Pedagogy

As mentioned, research and faculty awareness of writing instruction in Spanish and other world languages has not been a central focus in world language education or graduate student training. However, despite this lack of pedagogical knowledge and training, Spanish heritage courses often focus almost exclusively on reading and writing skills (Potowski et al. 2009). This strong focus on writing, which is typically conceptualized and associated with analytic feedback based on a prestige variety of Spanish, may seem at odds with SHL pedagogy, which emphasizes placing value on home varieties of the HL (Mikulski et al. 2019) and identity development (Torres et al. 2017). HL instructors recognize the challenges and complexities of giving feedback. Indeed, some of the issues overlap with those faced by L2 instructors, such as who should provide feedback—peers or the instructor—and what type of feedback best suits the instructional goals. Others, however, are unique to the HL context (Potowski et al. 2009). One reason feedback for the two groups of students should be unique is because of the stigmatization and ridicule HLL have faced due to the linguistic variety they use (Mikulski et al. 2019). For additional strategies specific to giving written feedback in HL writing instruction, see Mikulski et al. (2019).

### 1.4. Calls for Curricular Change

When the 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) Report called for bold changes in the undergraduate L2 curriculum with a goal of removing the bifurcation that exists in many departments, they also called for changes in the training of graduate student instructors to focus on professional development to prepare them to enter a field with the tools to teach a transformed curriculum with a focus on contextualized, multiliteracies instruction (Allen and Dupuy 2011; Paesani 2011). However, the MLA Report lacked specific recommendations for *how* to redesign the curricula (Lomicka and Lord 2018) to better serve the needs of students and departments.

Since the 2007 Report, there have been continuous calls for improving undergraduate student curriculum and graduate student preparation as well as suggestions for how the field might overcome the language–literature divide to better prepare graduate students for post-graduation endeavors (e.g., Allen 2009; Allen and Maxim 2011; Allen and Paesani 2020). Many of these suggestions are framed in literacy-based instruction, which centralizes the development of L2 and HL learners creative and complex understanding of texts in multiple modes as well as how they relate to the cultural context in which they were produced (Paesani et al. 2016). Furthermore, not only are students

developing an understanding of texts in multiple modes, but they are also producing multimodal, culturally informed texts as part of a multiliteracies curriculum. The creation of such texts often requires the use of a variety of technological tools and resources and includes, but is not limited to, the creation of blogs, digital stories, story maps, tweets, and other social media platforms (Oskoz and Elola 2020). Such a literacy-based curriculum is contrasted with communicative language teaching, which centralizes the focus on the development of oral skills (Allen 2018).

Kern (2000) has emphasized the importance of “an integrative, student-centered approach, solidly grounded in an Available Designs core, but that also attends to the interdependencies among textual products, cognitive processes, and sociocultural factors. That is, an approach that focuses on meaning as it is constructed *through* form in a cultural context” (p. 185, emphasis original). Such a learner-centered approach aligns with pedagogical practices of today and, therefore, may be more easily integrated into current curricula than another type of approach. However, the challenge of incorporating writing into the L2 curriculum still exists, as does the issue of reconceptualizing writing to be an essential skill to include, rather than merely a support skill. To further explore this topic, the present study will first present a needs-analysis examining how graduate students and recent graduates of literature and cultural studies, SLA, and (applied) linguistics conceptualize multiliteracies and L2 and HL writing instruction and how they incorporate it into their classrooms. The pedagogical practices of graduate students and recent graduates regarding multiliteracies, including L2 and HL writing and composing both with and without the use of technological tools are essential to understand because these skills must be included in the curriculum to improve undergraduate education and preparation for working in a multicultural and global world (Thoms 2011). Following the presentation of these results, a discussion of potential reasons for why the field is slow to modify L2 and HL writing pedagogies and how we might implement less drastic, but still effective graduate student professional development going forward.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Because Hubert and Bonzo (2019) and Mikulski et al. (2019) recently examined how current instructors incorporate writing into their curricula and the training they received, the current study aimed to explore the next generation of the professoriate: current graduate students and recent graduates. The present study investigated how graduate students and recent graduates conceptualize and incorporate digital L2 and HL writing literacies in the courses they teach, to better understand the types of writing students are exposed to in their L2 and HL courses by answering the following research questions:

1. How do graduate students and recent graduates of SLA, (applied) linguistics, or literature and cultural studies conceptualize writing in the L2 and HL courses they teach?
  - a. What projects and assignments do they incorporate into the curricula?
2. How do graduate students and recent graduates of SLA, (applied) linguistics, or literature and cultural studies conceptualize multiliteracies in the L2 and HL courses they teach?
  - a. What projects and assignments do they incorporate into the curricula?
3. What kind of training (if any) have graduate students and recent graduates of SLA, (applied) linguistics, or literature and cultural studies received related to L2 and HL writing pedagogy?
4. What kind of support (if any) do graduate students and recent graduates of SLA, (applied) linguistics, or literature and cultural studies need to more effectively teach L2 and HL writing?

To answer these research questions, this study begins with a survey by first examining how graduate students and recent graduates conceptualize writing and multiliteracies instruction and surveys what projects and activities they implement in the courses they teach. Recent graduates were defined as those who had graduated less than three years ago

from a Master's or Doctoral program. Participants were in fields such as specific foreign language and/or cultural studies, (applied) linguistics, world language education, or other related fields that enable them to teach L2 or HL courses.

By conducting a needs analysis in the form of a survey in which current graduate students and recent graduates were asked about their previous training, implementation, teaching practices, and needs for additional support in order to successfully teach L2 and HL writing skills, a design-based research methodology was implemented in which there is "a collaboration of researchers and educational practitioners whereby they develop answers to educational problems and advance theoretical understanding" (Martens et al. 2019). In this framework, once students have provided input, the educational process can be redesigned and tested to examine what might work, under which specific conditions, and why.

To carry out this needs analysis, an anonymous survey was created and distributed using Qualtrics (Appendix A). It consisted of 21 total questions: 13 short-answer responses, seven Likert-scale (scale of 1–4) responses, and one demographic multiple-choice question to indicate their status as a Master's, Doctoral, or recently graduated student (e.g., within the last three years). The survey was distributed through an anonymous link to faculty to share with their graduate students at five large, doctoral granting institutions where doctoral students teach first- and second- year language courses, as well as via several relevant groups via social media. Respondents had the option of entering their email address using a separate link (to maintain anonymity of their answers) to be entered to win a \$10 gift card.

In total, 41 individuals began the survey and 17 provided responses with enough detail to be included in data analysis. Of these, five respondents were MA graduate students (29.41%), and eight were PhD students (47.06%). Three respondents had graduated with their MA less than three years ago (17.65%) and two had graduated with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. less than three years ago (11.76%). No one indicated having any other status.

Although this is a small sample of the population who is currently teaching, the main goal of this survey was exploratory in nature to gain insights into how graduate students and recent graduates conceptualize L2 and HL writing and multiliteracies instruction and what (if any) writing assignments their students are completing as part of their L2 or HL coursework.

#### *Data Analysis*

Once data were collected, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the seven ordinal scale Likert responses. To analyze the open-ended data, open coding (Saldaña 2016) was used to discern initial codes from the data. First, data were coded by question to categorize them by L2, HL, or multiliteracies instruction. All responses to each question were then coded sequentially to create codes generated from the data itself.

### **3. Results**

To begin to understand the types of writing assignments and activities students are completing in their L2 and HL courses, it is important to understand how graduate students and recent graduates conceptualize and include L2 and HL writing and multiliteracies instruction in the courses they teach, responses to the Likert-scale questions will be presented. Following this synopsis of results, results from the open-ended responses will be summarized. Representative comments from the open-ended responses will also be provided in an effort to capture the essence of the responses provided.

#### *3.1. Likert-Scale Responses*

The seven Likert-scale items probed respondents' thoughts on the importance of writing instruction and multiliteracies instruction in the L2 and HL courses they teach. They also probed respondents' confidence in their abilities to teach L2 and HL students writing and multiliteracies skills in their respective courses. When asked how important writing instruction was in the L2 courses they teach, five instructors responded that it was very important by rating it a 4, while no one responded that it was or not at all important

by rating it a 1. Six instructors each responded that writing was just above or just below the middle, giving it a 2 or a 3 on the 1–4 scale. When they were asked to rate their confidence in their ability to teach L2 writing to their students on a scale of 1–4 (with 1 signifying not at all confident and 4 signifying very confident), eight instructors responded with a rating of 2, six instructors rated their confidence at the level of 3 and three instructors rated themselves as very confident by responding with a rating of a 4.

Moving to heritage language courses, 9 of the 17 respondents were not teaching HL courses. However, when asked to rate the importance of writing in HL courses, out of the 8 instructors who were teaching HL courses, one responded that writing was not at all important (with a rating of 1) and 3 responded that writing was very important (indicated by a rating of 4). Four instructors rated writing 3 (out of a possible 4) and none of them gave it the importance of a 2. Of the eight instructors who responded to the importance of writing in both L2 and HL courses, five indicated the same level of importance in both contexts (either 3 or 4). Two instructors increased (one from a rating of 2 to 3 and one from a rating of 3 to 4) and one decreased their rating from 2 to 1.

Eleven instructors reflected on their confidence in teaching HL writing to their students. Three of these instructors indicated they were very confident, five indicated a confidence level of a 3 out of 4, and three instructors indicated their confidence level was a 2 out of a possible 4. No instructor who answered this question said they were not at all confident (1) in their ability to teach HL writing to their HL students.

Finally, instructors were asked to reflect on multiliteracies instruction in the L2 and HL courses they teach. Eight instructors rated multiliteracies instruction as very important in L2 instruction, three responded that it was a level 3 out of 4, one person said it was a level 2, and four instructors responded that multiliteracies instruction was not important at all in the L2 courses that they teach. Results were similar for the responses regarding the importance of multiliteracies in HL courses. However, several instructors did not respond to this question. Seven instructors responded that multiliteracies is very important in the HL courses they teach, three responded it was not important at all, and one person each rated the importance a level two and a level three. For respondents who answered both questions regarding the importance of multiliteracies in HL and L2 courses they teach, all but two responded that multiliteracies was of equal importance in both contexts. One instructor rated it a 3 out of 4 in L2 courses and a 2 out of 4 in HL courses and the other instructor rated it a 3 out of 4 in L2 courses and a 4 out of 4, or very important, in HL courses.

### 3.2. Short-Answer Responses

Before examining the free-response results, it is important to point out that just 35.3% of respondents (6 of 17) had received formal training in L2 or HL writing instruction, while 23.5% of respondents (4 of 17) reported having received formal training in L2 or HL multiliteracies instruction. Within the responses for those who had received training, some participants reported having received instruction related to L2 and HL writing “incorporated into regular TA training”. Others realized that despite not having “taken any courses focused on multiliteracies . . . [they had] read and discussed this instructional pedagogy in one of [their] doctoral classes [and] . . . done [their] own research (i.e., New London Group: Cope & Kalantzis)”. Others, however, had taken a full course dedicated to L2 writing instruction.

When prompted to define or describe what came to mind upon reading *second language writing instruction*, just three people (17.65%) mentioned the use of technology and just one person (5.88%) mentioned multi-modality, but as something that is “more informal, such as a digital story” as opposed to something “formal [like] an essay”. Instead, most responses related to the teaching and learning of L2 grammatical norms, conventions, and patterns, and how to improve them. Several respondents also mentioned the use and importance of L2 writing to improve L2 speaking skills or writing to learn and others focused on the product, such as an essay and the feedback given to students, or the task or composition that students complete such as “describe your family, [or] narrate your favorite vacation”.

One person associated *second language writing instruction* with digital stories and another with focusing on comprehensibility rather than form.

Two people associated “second language writing instruction” with a negative feeling, responding, “Something I do not like to teach” and one even responded with the association of “racist white people”. The same participant who associated “second language writing instruction” with “racist white people” also associated “HL writing instruction” with racism. They responded, “first thing that comes to mind, ‘lord, I hate that term’, second thing that comes to mind is racist people like racist white people who make books on HL instruction particularly around writing and grammar for a language that isn’t theirs”.

### 3.2.1. Activities and Assignments in the L2/HL Classroom

Participants indicated including a wide range of projects and activities related to writing in the L2 courses they taught, indicating a broad conceptualization of what writing in the L2/HL classroom can be. However, the majority of students taught by the instructors who responded to this survey are not learning to write using technology. Just three respondents (17.65%) included a response that indicated including some type of technology in the writing activities or assignments their students were completing. Two of these three (11.76% of the 17 total) responded indicating students created multimodal texts including either digital stories or a flyer or advertisement.

The majority of instructors conceptualized writing as a support skill rather than a skill essential for communication in the 21st century. Some indicated a focus on activities related to writing to learn when students “write down sentences with their partners during partner work instead of just verbally speaking” and “unscrambling words” because their “students really like” this activity. Other writing-related activities this instructor includes is to remind students to focus on spelling when students are learning new vocabulary. Other respondents mentioned a more process-based approach to writing where students “write texts, but split into many mini sections” and also have “peer reviewing”. Another instructor mentioned using “students’ compositions to point out mistakes in class to show other students . . . so all students can learn from the errors”. Specific activities mentioned included a variety of genres as well, including digital stories, description, narrative, informal and formal letters, writing a fairy tale without proper nouns to create a guessing game, online discussion forums and argumentative essays based on class discussions, and a five-paragraph essay. One person also mentioned the importance of students’ language level to determine what assignments and activities to include.

Many fewer instructors responded to the same questions about HL writing instruction. In fact, five responded “N/A”. Just two (11.76%) instructors mentioned including some type of technology use in HL writing instruction assignments. One specified having students create digital stories and another mentioned having students write tweets. Three people used the same answer as they did for L2 writing instruction and one additional person responded, “I never had the opportunity to teach a heritage speaker class, but I had had heritage speakers in my classes. Since I had to use the same base materials as with the rest of the class, I just made sure I tweaked them and adapt them, emphasizing enhanced feedback explaining how what they already knew as a form of saying things would have to be adapted to a more formal writing style”.

### 3.2.2. Multiliteracies

It seems unsurprising, perhaps due to the lack of training in L2 or HL writing, that several participants who reported not having received training were unclear about how to define multiliteracies or what projects and assignments might be part of a multiliteracies instructional framework. Relatedly, when asked what projects or assignments they had used in the L2 course they taught, some of those who had not received training indicated they had not included any multiliteracies instruction in their L2 courses. Some mentioned projects that included having students write in different genres, such as “after [reading] an article having to text a summary to a friend”. Others still, focused on multilingualism

rather than multiliteracies in their responses, saying “I ask them to use a mix of Spanish and English, but I do that mostly because their response [sic] are much more profound”. One person, however, who indicated not having received any training in multiliteracies instruction, made it clear that they were against the idea of teaching multiliteracies in the L2 classroom and “[did] not think it is important to describe literacy as multiliteracies” they went on to say, “students are already proficient in the so-called ‘new-medias’”. Interestingly, this respondent indicated including website creation and videos as part of multiliteracies projects and/or assignments in the HL curriculum.

### 3.2.3. A Desire for Additional Training

Despite the lack of training in L2 and HL writing and multiliteracies instruction, 70.5% of respondents (12 of 17) specified additional relevant resources or training they would need to help prepare them to teach multiliteracies to HL or L2 students. These results are promising for the most part. Even though many graduate students or recent graduates did not report training or formal coursework in multiliteracies instruction, the majority of them indicated a desire for additional training or support.

In addition to the lack of training that many respondents reported, they also pointed to more specific challenges, questions, and struggles they had about both L2 and HL writing instruction. Some pointed out the lack of L1 writing skills students are equipped with that make it more difficult to engage and teach L2 writing and of students’ inappropriate use of technology and lack of motivation as well as the lack of their own interest in writing that makes it challenging to teach. Others focused more on correction and feedback, questioning how and when they should “correct their mistakes since [their] main objective would be their cultivation of Spanish selfesteem [sic] and production”. Several others echoed this notion of struggling with what and how to correct students’ writing, especially in the case of heritage learners, writing, “I often find that heritage language learners have extensive knowledge of the vernacular, and can struggle to learn a more formal register, particularly that associated with academic writing . . . we certainly do not want to make their home variety look less relevant or correct”. Another person commented wanting to “empower heritage speakers and to some extent break down with norms imposed by mainstream speakers” but they were conflicted because they realized the need for “some consistency so that communication is efficient”.

## 4. Discussion

The results of the short-answer responses began by highlighting the lack of training recently graduated instructors and graduate student TAs had in L2 and HL writing and multiliteracies instruction, and, therefore, a lack of inclusion of technology for L2 and HL writing and multiliteracies instruction as well as a general lack of multimodal assignments. It is important to begin by pointing out the lack of training reported because this, combined with the lack of experience in teaching HL learners as well as an inexperience in designing curriculum contextualized the remaining results and frames the following discussion.

In light of these results, which support [Hubert and Bonzo’s \(2019\)](#) study in which participants indicated very low levels of knowledge related to L2 writing theory and pedagogy, combined with participants’ desire for additional training and support relating to teaching L2 and HL writing skills, and the continued calls for the integration of technology, multiliteracies, and other 21st century skills to be taught in L2 and HL classrooms ([Lomicka and Lord 2018](#); [Modern Language Association 2007](#); [Oskoz and Elola 2020](#)), there is a strong case for additional training for graduate students during their graduate studies. It also supports [Allen’s \(2020\)](#) results where participants also reported a lack of professional development, time, and self-beliefs as reasons for not including writing in their curricula. Given the evolving importance of writing skills in the 21st century, it seems justified to provide various research-based suggestions for additional training methods for graduate students, including those in SLA and (applied) linguistics as well as those in literature

and cultural studies, since, as [Hubert and Bonzo \(2019\)](#) found, often times it is faculty of literature and cultural studies who teach writing courses.

Based on the results of the surveyed graduate students and recent graduates, most respondents are open to the idea of including writing in their curricula, however, the majority also remarked that they felt underprepared to do so, requesting additional training via workshops or more formal coursework. The additional training and inclusion of writing in L2 and HL courses would increase the likelihood that students would meet the 21st Century Skills for World Languages, which include the ability to effectively communicate and present information in the target language in both written and spoken modes in a variety of contexts, including those mediated by technology ([Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2011](#)).

Graduate student and recent graduates' desires for additional training supports previous research, suggesting that novice-level instructors are unable to process and apply concepts they were exposed to in the methods course ([Allen 2011](#); [Brandl 2000](#); [Rankin and Becker 2006](#)). To this point, there have been several published examples for how we might provide improved training for graduate students who intend to teach language following the completion of their degree program(s), including the 2011 edited volume by the American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Language Program Directors, *Educating the Future Foreign Language Professoriate for the 21st Century* ([Allen and Maxim 2011](#)) as well as other work published separately ([Allen 2018](#); [Byrnes 2001](#); [Dupuy and Allen 2012](#); [Worden 2019](#)). Many of these authors suggest an additional methods course ([Allen and Dupuy 2011](#); [Kern 2011](#); [Worden 2019](#)), substantial additional training due to curricular redesign ([Byrnes 2001](#); [Rossomondo 2011](#)), or even a support group implementing an exploratory practice framework to promote reflective teaching, training, and development ([Crane et al. 2011](#)) after the first semester course that is required for most graduate teaching assistants. I would suggest that the additional methods course be taught with a specialized topic, perhaps specifically to address designing courses for HL learners, L2/HL multiliteracies instruction, languages (both L2 and HL) for specific purposes, or teaching using content-based instruction to give the future professoriate pedagogical skills they will certainly need.

Many of the aforementioned publications cite the 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) Report, which called for "substantive training in language teaching and in the use of new technologies" (p. 3) as support for additional graduate student professional development. However, despite the call from the MLA and the subsequent publication of research with additional detail specifying how the incorporation of such professional development might look, it seems many graduate students and recent graduate still feel underprepared, especially when it comes to teaching writing and multiliteracies to HL learners.

Therefore, it is possible that graduate student preparation has not undergone much change since the 2007 MLA Report despite these publications in part to the still entrenched language–literature divide that exists in most departments ([Lomicka and Lord 2018](#)). As a result of this still-strong bifurcation, in most world language departments training graduate students in teaching (which includes the use of technology) falls under the purview of the language program director (LPD) or a specialist in SLA or linguistics, while discipline-specific knowledge and training is the responsibility of another, separate group of faculty ([Reeser 2011](#)).

This makes departmental redesign, as suggested by [Byrnes \(2001\)](#) and [Rossomondo \(2011\)](#), quite difficult. It also leaves designs like [Worden's \(2019\)](#) innovative unfamiliar genre project in which she required graduate students to research a genre that was novel to them and prepare materials to then teach it, quite challenging to implement without the addition of additional coursework since the LPD is not likely to teach discipline-specific courses and may only have some students in class once throughout their graduate careers. Of course, it might be beneficial to expand opportunities for graduate students to take additional coursework in the field that is not their central focus and encourage them to pursue a minor. For example, if their main field of study is literature and cultural studies, they might be encouraged to minor in SLA or foreign language education, and vice versa.

Perhaps this could help to bridge the gap that exists between many literature-studies faculty and linguistics and SLA faculty (Reeser 2011), ultimately allowing for additional discussions between faculty for how their work can be connected for the benefit and training of students.

#### 4.1. Biweekly Meetings

Weekly or bi-weekly professional development meetings could be another way to bolster the training and professional development of graduate students so they would be more comfortable including L2 multiliteracies instruction in their curricula. This is a training model that has been implemented at Texas Tech University as a way to continue to engage graduate students and to continue to talk about teaching throughout the pandemic. However, it is a training model that we plan to continue post-pandemic. As part of the 20 h per week graduate students are contracted to work, one hour is a required meeting. The hour for this meeting is built into the schedule so all graduate students are free; that is, no one is teaching or taking courses. Because many of our graduate students are also parents, we also do not schedule meetings during school drop-off or pick-up time.

Every week, graduate students meet (virtually via Zoom or in person). One week they meet by levels to discuss teaching and their specific courses amongst themselves and to establish a community of practice. These meetings are led by a more experienced graduate student who receives a small stipend. Any questions and concerns they have about upcoming assignments or grading are brought up and resolved. If they cannot be resolved they are brought to the language program director for assistance. Specifically, they discuss the rubrics available to grade subjective assignments such as course projects, oral exams, and writing assignments. Together they are able to talk through any challenges of using the rubrics provided and propose suggestions for a modified version. Gathering samples of assignments for each rubric category to use in subsequent semesters as examples for both students and instructors is another technique that could be useful. Instructors could use the samples to help norm their grading and students could use the example writings to see how previous students interpreted and produced new texts in response to the prompt.

During the other weeks (that is, every other) that they are not meeting by level, all graduate students meet together. The first 10 min are for any announcements that need to be made or any achievements to celebrate. Following this, a speaker (internal or external) gives a presentation for approximately 30 min. Topics during the last year have focused on professional development and practical technological tools for teaching during the pandemic such as maximizing the use of the learning management system, using Feedback Fruits, tracking and rewarding student progress online, and giving feedback in the online environment, among others. Some of these presentations were given by more advanced graduate students who had demonstrated exceptional teaching or innovative methods.

The Basic Languages Program at the University of Cincinnati employs a similar model (following a two-credit, mini-course teaching orientation) where TAs and instructors meet throughout the semester to discuss upcoming projects, how to effectively scaffold them, how to use the rubric to grade them, and to go over any questions they have. Advanced TAs and instructors are also invited to research and give presentations during meetings on relevant topics that they have done exceptionally well. Relevant topics for these talks could certainly include HL learners, L2 writing, and multiliteracies instruction.

Because graduate students need to use technological tools to teach written communication in their future classrooms in order to better prepare their undergraduate students for their post-graduation work environments, it is essential that graduate students and recent graduates receive training on how to implement these tools to achieve L2 and HL writing goals (Thoms 2011). Even if graduate students and recent graduates are familiar with technology and use a variety of tools in their everyday lives (Thoms 2011), the discussion of how to incorporate specific tools along with precise goals related to multiliteracies

for instructors to strive for, if they would like to incorporate additional technology or multiliteracies instruction into their courses.

Moving forward, these trainings will be tied more explicitly to L2 pedagogy and theory as well and topics will be based off of a modified needs analysis survey that will be administered at the beginning of the semester. As suggested by Thoms (2011), language program directors might also take advantage of webinars and workshops offered by textbook publishers to assist in the professional development of graduate students.

Based on the results of the present study I anticipate covering multiliteracies, L2 and HL writing, and materials and assignment creation during the next semester. Furthermore, going forward I would like to explore the possibility of including several days in the course calendar for an instructor-designed project, since Thoms (2011) and Allen (2020) both found that time was a reason instructors did not incorporate technology and writing, respectively, into their courses.

#### 4.2. Outside Workshops

In addition to bi-weekly professional development meetings, graduate students in Spanish and Portuguese at Texas Tech University are also required to attend at least two professional development workshops per semester. They are required to record and report these workshops in their annual reviews. Students are encouraged to attend workshops sponsored by the graduate school on a variety of topics related to professionalization; however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have also been a wide variety of free workshops offered by National Language Resource Centers related to multiliteracies, L2 and HL writing, and HL learners. By making a list of available workshops and showing graduate students where they might find additional, appropriate workshops they would benefit from, they would have more autonomy in the specific topics of the workshops they attended. Furthermore, to follow-up, they could then report back and share what they learned during their smaller meetings to encourage and practice the sharing and articulation of ideas and continue to build a community of practice.

One workshop that has been particularly influential and beneficial to graduate students and faculty at Texas Tech University was put on by the Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development Center (TLPDC). The TLPDC sponsored a workshop by the Storycenter ([www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org), accessed on 8 April 2021) to train a cohort of faculty, graduate students, and staff in creating and teaching with digital stories (for additional research on the implementation of digital stories in the FL/HL classroom see Elola and Oskoz 2017; Oskoz and Elola 2014; Oskoz and Elola 2016). The following year the TLPDC facilitated its own workshop related to the creation and pedagogical implementation of digital stories. Furthermore, the TLPDC sponsors licenses each semester for a number of courses to use WeVideo software for students to create digital stories as part of their coursework.

Including this training to bolster the preparedness of students outside the classrooms is important because not only are graduate students and recent graduates requesting additional training in multiliteracies pedagogies, but, as Kern (2000) eloquently wrote in the introduction to his book, *Literacy and Language Teaching*:

academic language teaching must foster literacy, not only in terms of basic reading and writing skills, but also in terms of a broader discourse competence that involves the ability to interpret and critically evaluate a wide variety of written and spoken texts. Preparing students to communicate in multiple cultural contexts, both at home and abroad, means sensitizing them to discourse practices in other societies and to the ways those discourse practices both reflect and create cultural norms. (2)

#### 5. Limitations

It is important to note that this study, as with all studies, is not without its limitations. Principally the study is limited by a small sample size, and potential sampling bias. The

majority of the respondents to the survey were graduate students or recent graduates from Texas Tech University, a Hispanic-Serving Institution with a Heritage Language Program and faculty who research multimodality and multiliteracies (e.g., [Michelson 2019](#); [Oskoz and Elola 2020](#)), meaning they likely have more knowledge than graduate students or recent graduate from other institutions. Furthermore, while there were participants from other, outside institutions and the survey was sent to a number of institutions, perhaps in the future working directly with researchers at these institutions or offering more attractive incentives for those who complete the survey would motivate a more diverse group of respondents. It is for this reason that the focus of the discussion is on curricular improvements and programmatic changes are reported from Texas Tech.

Furthermore, the possibility for sampling bias exists, where those who are interested in multiliteracies or multimodality may have been more likely to complete the survey. However, because of the variety of responses (including those which expressed negative views about the two), this was not a huge concern. It was a concern that those who were unfamiliar with the terms did not complete the survey because they did not believe it was applicable to them, or because they were not interested, when in reality, this would have been important information to report. While there were respondents who admitted to not knowing how to define some of the terms, or not having taught HL courses, it is still possible that others excluded themselves because of disinterest or lack of knowledge.

## 6. Conclusions

Previous research ([Kern 2000](#)) suggests that multiliteracies skills have become essential skills to develop in both the L2 and HL classrooms to prepare students to effectively communicate in a myriad of contexts that they will need in their futures. These skills should begin to be developed from the first semester and not be put off until more advanced or upper-level courses, which only furthers the departmental bifurcation ([Modern Language Association 2007](#)) and leaves students underprepared and unable to successfully complete textual analysis assignments required in their more advanced coursework. However, in order to develop students' multiliteracies skills beginning in the first- and second-year courses, additional training in multiliteracies pedagogy and technology for graduate students is necessary. As shown in the responses to this survey, many graduate students and recent graduates do not feel prepared to incorporate a multiliteracies methodology or, even more basically, multiliteracies-informed projects in their L2 or HLL courses, and many would welcome additional training to be able to do so.

Like the development of L2 and HL writing skills, graduate student training to incorporate multiliteracies into the curriculum should also begin during the first semester and continue through graduation for graduate students. Even while graduate students are writing their dissertations, they should be encouraged to continue attending professional development related to teaching so their ideas and pedagogy stay fresh and innovative for when they take their next step in their careers, wherever that may be.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** This research was approved by IRB2021-88. The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Texas Tech University (protocol code IRB2021-88, 10 February 2021).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A

### Survey

1. What comes to mind (or how would you define/describe) second language writing instruction?
2. On a scale of 1–4 (1—not important at all, 4—very important), how important is writing instruction in the SECOND LANGUAGE course(s) you teach?
3. What characteristics does second language writers' writing have?
4. On a scale of 1–4 (1—not at all confident, 4—super confident), how confident are you in your ability to teach SECOND LANGUAGE writing to your students?
5. What comes to mind (or how would you define/describe) heritage language writing instruction?
6. On a scale of 1–4 (1—not important at all, 4—very important), how important is writing instruction in the HERITAGE LANGUAGE course(s) you teach?
7. On a scale of 1–4 (1—not at all confident, 4—super confident), how confident are you in your ability to teach HERITAGE LANGUAGE writing to your students?
8. Describe the training or instruction you received (and when/where/for how long you received it) on L2 and/or heritage language writing instruction.
9. What are some examples of projects and assignments you have used or might use to teach writing in the second language classroom?
10. What are some examples of projects and assignments you have used or might use to teach writing in the Heritage Language classroom?
11. What are some questions, challenges, or struggles you have about second or heritage language writing instruction?
12. What comes to mind (or how would you define/describe) multiliteracies?
13. On a scale of 1–4 (1—not important at all, 4—very important), how important is multiliteracies instruction in the SECOND LANGUAGE course(s) you teach?
14. On a scale of 1–4 (1—not important at all, 4—very important), how important is multiliteracies instruction in the HERITAGE LANGUAGE course(s) you teach?
15. Describe the training or instruction you received (and when/where/for how long you received it) on L2 or heritage language multiliteracies instruction.
16. What are some of the projects or assignments you have used or might use to teach multiliteracies in the second language course(s) you teach?
17. What are some of the projects or assignments you have used or might use to teach multiliteracies in the heritage language course(s) you teach?
18. What would additional resources, support, or training would you need to feel that you were prepared to teach multiliteracies to heritage or second language students?
19. Would you like to add anything else relating to heritage or second language writing/multiliteracies instruction or training that you have not yet shared? If so, please do so here.
20. Please indicate if you are:
  - a. MA graduate student
  - b. Graduated (MA) less than 3 years ago
  - c. PhD graduate student
  - d. Graduated (PhD/EdD) less than 3 years ago

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