

■ Introduction

ALAN HIRVELA AND DIANE BELCHER

Argumentative writing has been part of the landscape of the second language (L2) writing field since its emergence as a field in its own right in the 1980s. By argumentative writing we mean writing in which, at a minimum, an author states a claim, uses some form of evidence—data, reasons, examples, etc.—to support the claim, and shows how the evidence supports the claim, i.e., engages in what is called warranting. In more elaborate forms, such writing may also include backing—statements which elaborate on the authority underlying the warrants—as well as rebuttals challenging the argument being made, and counterarguments which refute the rebuttals. Collectively, these elements form the core architecture of what is known as the “Toulmin model” introduced by Stephen Toulmin in 1958 and widely considered the dominant approach to argument used in argumentative writing instruction.

As noted by Silva (1993) in his major review of L2 writing research across different topics, early argumentative work focused on identifying the structures used by L2 writers in their argumentative essays. Another major topic in this earlier period was the issue of how to assess L2 argumentative essays. This was especially true in a series of important articles, book chapters, and conference presentations by Ulla Connor that involved looking at native language (L1) and L2 influences and relationships.

Argumentative writing was also one of the topics explored in two major international studies (1988, 1992) of writing conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Here, too, there was an emphasis on the characteristics and assessment of such writing. The scope began to widen in the 1990s (e.g., Belcher, 1997, focusing on models of argument, and Johns, 1993, looking at audience-related issues). In the current century, there has been a gradual increase in argumentatively oriented L2 scholarship, and it has continued to move beyond the foci of earlier argumentative work.

However, the situation on the whole is less than satisfactory. This point was brought home forcefully in a 2017 “Disciplinary Dialogues” section of the

Journal of Second Language Writing that addressed the current state of L2 argumentative writing scholarship. In his lead piece that initiated the dialogue, Hirvela raised a question as to whether L2 writing scholars are “missing the boat” in this area and commented on a number of specific shortcomings that he felt needed to be addressed. The authors of six commentaries written in response to his contribution (including some who appear in this edited collection: Ann Johns, Amanda Kibler, Silvia Pessoa, and Lia Plakans) shared a core belief in the importance of argumentative writing and offered important recommendations for how to move the field forward in this domain. This edited collection, *Argumentative Writing in a Second Language: Perspectives on Research and Pedagogy*, is in part a follow-up to this “Disciplinary Dialogues” conversation. That is, we have sought to explore, in greater depth, some of the questions and issues raised in that 2017 collection of papers, as well as other published work on this topic. We have also drawn upon our own experiences and knowledge as L2 writing scholars and teachers. We have witnessed firsthand the challenges that both teachers and students encounter as they engage this important but complex type of writing.

Another perspective guiding us in assembling this volume is how little L2 argumentative scholarship there is compared to the L1 domain as relates to both the teaching and learning of argumentative writing. This is a significant gap that needs to be filled. As Hirvela observed in his 2017 essay, in the L1 field there is what he called an “argument industry.” In the L1 field, for example, there are numerous textbooks devoted *solely* to argumentative writing, many published in more than one edition due to their popularity. The same cannot be said about the L2 writing field. Indeed, there are no textbooks of that kind. Furthermore, when argument is addressed in L2 writing textbooks, it appears as just one type (or mode) of writing to be taught in a writing class. Even if L2 textbook writers note its importance as a kind of writing that students need to acquire, its significance is diminished by the fact that it is surrounded by so much information about other essay types (or modes) and other areas of writing. The argumentative essay is just one more face in the writing crowd.

Also noteworthy in the L1 field is the publication of teacher resource books that help prepare teachers to teach argumentative writing. Here, again, there are entire *books* devoted to argument, and they provide what might be called mainstream teachers with a wealth of pedagogical information and guidance. And here, too, we do not see an equivalent situation in the L2 field. Nor do we see edited collections focused on L2 argumentative writing. A number of such collections focusing on argumentative writing have been published, but L2-related work is almost non-existent in them.

This situation leaves L2 writing teachers with difficult choices to make. One option is to depend on the L1 textbooks and resource books and then attempt to adjust and transfer that input to the L2 writing classroom. While this effort may work to some degree, a challenge to overcome is that the L1 material is aimed at native speakers/writers of the target language (i.e., English in this case) and thus does not account for characteristics, nuances, and needs specific to L2 writers. Another choice is to draw upon the small supply of individual L2 articles that offer pedagogical suggestions and recommendations. However, despite the quality of that work, this is a still vastly underdeveloped body of pedagogical scholarship that is not likely to fully meet the needs of teachers, especially those lacking experience. Meanwhile, and as suggested earlier, L2 writing textbooks that include coverage of argumentation tend to allocate only a small amount of space to it due to the need to cover other essay types and topics. Furthermore, they are likely to present it in more formulaic ways that lead to superficial understanding and treatment of the argumentative essay. Thus, textbook treatment of argumentation, depending on the textbook, may not be the best option for many teachers. Finally, L2 writing teachers can also choose to rely strictly on their own instincts and beliefs, and for experienced L2 writing teachers, with their accumulation of experience and insight, this approach may work, but what about those who lack such a background?

In the final analysis, there is, at present, no place where L2 writing teachers can consult a larger body of L2 argumentative work instead of relying on fragments of argumentative scholarship that, however good it is, does not present a comprehensive and deeply informed picture of L2 argumentative writing. Our intention in this edited volume is to begin filling that gap in the L2 writing field by offering a wide-ranging collection of chapters that can serve as a first critical mass of L2 argumentative writing scholarship—that is, one thorough place where teachers and scholars can take an in-depth look at L2 argumentative writing.

Mitchell (2000, p. 146) points out that “a defining characteristic of a good student at the undergraduate level is success in argumentative writing.” Along these same lines, Miller, Mitchell, and Pessoa (2016, p. 11) explain that “argumentative writing is a vital but challenging genre for university students, particularly second language writers.” These same observations can apply to some L2 students at earlier points in their educational lives. This overall situation, together with the lack of sustained explorations of L2 argumentative writing, is what we sought to address in compiling this collection. Our hope is that this volume will also inspire the creation of other more substantial bodies of work that give teachers and researchers more

extensive food for thought and more substantial supplies of pedagogical guidance.

While we have arranged the book so that it contains material that will appeal to teachers and researchers, we do not see these as separate groups of readers. Indeed, those chapters that view argumentative writing through a research lens focus on the L2 writing classroom and offer information as well as insights that can feed into classroom practice. Thus, while the book features separate sections that provide information, ideas, and insights concerning how we conceptualize argumentative writing for L2 writers (Part 1) and the results of classroom-based explorations of argumentative writing instruction (Part 2), we see the two parts as having reciprocal or bidirectional relationships with each other.

Another introductory point we want to draw attention to is a well-known distinction between two core orientations to argumentative pedagogy—*learning to argue* and *arguing to learn*—that directly or indirectly inform the chapters appearing in the two parts of the book. *Learning to argue* is an approach in which the primary intention is to help students build or construct arguments. In other words, they learn the commonly used ways of arranging or organizing an argumentative essay, as well as the reasoning underlying the content of their essay. In that respect, argumentation is an end or product. By contrast, *arguing to learn* is a pedagogical option in which the main purpose is to help students understand how to use argumentation as a tool of inquiry or learning, that is, as a process or means, not a product. The argumentative process leads them to deeper understanding of a topic or situation of interest to them. Our hope is that this book sheds useful light on these two different ways of treating argumentative writing.

Overview of Contents

This book features two parts, each comprising seven chapters. Part 1 is more discussion-oriented, with its authors offering analyses, perspectives, and suggestions that explore argumentative writing from a wide range of angles. Part 2 shifts the focus to argumentative writing in action via classroom-based research, as well as illustrations of what can be attempted and achieved in pedagogy. Through this arrangement, the book allows readers to view L2 argumentation in multiple ways and to triangulate their own understanding of and practices concerning L2 argumentative writing relative to the contexts in which they operate. This opportunity to engage L2 argumentation from numerous vantage points at the same time has been missing in

the L2 writing field, save for the handful of short commentaries in the 2017 “Disciplinary Dialogues” section of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*. Therefore, the transition from Part 1 to Part 2 in this volume takes readers through a journey into L2 argumentation that we hope will generate new ideas, new research, and new pedagogy. We now provide brief highlights of the book’s chapters.

Part 1: Conceptualizing Argumentative Writing Instruction and Research

This opening section of the volume addresses several different topics. The first chapter, “Situated Argumentation as a Rhetorical Act,” written by Ann Johns, views argumentative writing instruction through the broader lens of *rhetoric*. Johns begins with the construct of argumentation as a complicated and context-dependent type of writing involving a number of rhetorical acts and encourages teachers to approach it from the perspective of what she calls “rhetorical flexibility.” She cautions against viewing the argumentative essay as a rigid rhetorical structure to be imitated and discusses a number of aspects of argumentative writing that need to be accounted for in the creation of full, well-rounded argumentative essays. There are, she says, various rhetorical acts to be performed while composing an argumentative essay; she looks in particular at the language that is appropriate for the performance of these rhetorical acts. Also, as in other work she has published over the years, Johns promotes the idea of students studying the argumentative writing of experts and of teachers helping them, as novices, learn how to apply what experts do in their own L2 writing.

Amanda Kibler, Christine Hardigree, and Fares Karam, in “Online Resources for L2 Argumentative Writing in Secondary Schools: A View from the Field,” shift the focus to *resources* available to teachers—more specifically, online resources that would be of interest and value to high school teachers. Working from the premise that these resources operate as “defacto conceptualizations of argumentation,” they stress the need to carefully critique these resources. Their chapter then analyzes many of the activities and lesson plans in these resources. Next, in “Using the 3x3 Toolkit to Support Argumentative Writing across Disciplines,” Tom Mitchell and Silvia Pessoa introduce another angle, *discipline-based writing* and argument as a *genre*, while also working from a pedagogical resources framework. Drawing on insights from systemic functional linguistics, they introduce a pedagogical device, the “3X3 toolkit,” that they have developed to help students and teachers analyze and isolate genre features of argumentative writing as an important step toward

students being able to meet the genre-based expectations for argumentative writing in three specific disciplinary settings (history, organizational behavior, and information systems).

Another transition in focus occurs in “Source-Based Argumentative Writing Assessment,” where Lia Plakans and Renka Ohta discuss the *assessment* of argumentative writing involving the use of source texts and offer insights on how teachers can assess student performance through integrated reading-writing tasks that perform an argumentative function. Then, in “An Analysis of the Chinese Way of Arguing: Creating a Hybrid Model to Teach Argument as an Inquiry Process,” Weier Ye and Lan Wang-Hiles bring an *intercultural rhetoric* lens to the volume as they explore the philosophical values that help shape Chinese students’ understanding of argumentation and the challenges that arise for many Chinese writers as they transition to argumentative writing in English. Alan Hirvela then uses his chapter, “Expertise and the Teaching of Argumentative Writing,” to focus on the notion of *writing teacher expertise* and to propose a model of expertise that can be used to study writing teachers’ involvement in teaching argumentative writing. Noting the heavy emphasis in L2 argumentative writing research on students and their written performance—that is, student expertise—he discusses why it is equally important to study writing teachers and to foreground a notion of writing teacher expertise.

Part 1 concludes with “A Multilingual Orientation to Preparing Teaching Assistants to Teach Argumentation in First-Year Writing,” where Parva Panahi takes up the topic of *teacher preparation*, and more specifically, that of graduate teaching associates who teach first year writing (FYW) courses that include both L1 and L2 writers. Panahi writes about the value of having a notion of “difference” in such courses and wants teachers to have what she calls an “understanding of difference as a resource.” She describes a version of an FYW course for multilingual writers that could serve as a pedagogical model to be used in preparing FYW graduate teaching assistants.

Part 2: Applications and Research in the Classroom

In this part, we move into L2 classrooms where there are innovative approaches to teaching argumentation that researchers/teachers have closely examined the effectiveness of. The first two chapters, by Joel Bloch and Nugrahenny Zacharias, based in English as a second language (ESL) tertiary settings in the U.S., explore the affordances for teaching and learning argumentation in a digital multimodal environment, where the semiotic resources extend far beyond monomodal words on a page (or screen).

In “The New Bricolage: Assembling and Remixing Voice and Images in a Multimodal Argumentative Text,” Bloch examines how digital storytelling presents an alternative approach to argumentation capable of increasing novice authorial autonomy by enabling L2 composers to become *bricoleurs* who transformatively assemble found images with their personal argumentative narratives. By offering expanded means of developing and expressing authorial voice and engaging with audience, digital storytelling, as analyzed by Bloch, facilitates use of rhetorical strategies potentially of value in both multi- and monomodal argumentation. Similarly, in her chapter, “Remediating L2 Students’ Argumentation in an ESL Composition Class: From Print to Digital Argumentation,” Zacharias looks at how an L2 student’s remediation of a written argument in a website allows for the use of multiple visual modes with a variety of design options and intermodal relationship possibilities that greatly diversify the means of support for argumentative claims. Zacharias is realistic, however, about the disadvantages as well as the advantages of this digital approach to enlarging learners’ argumentative repertoires.

English as a foreign language (EFL) settings, where English language learners may have limited opportunities for exposure to and use of their target language, can present significant challenges to teachers of L2 argumentative writing. In the next three chapters, the authors explicate how they have productively addressed these challenges in EFL settings. In “Blending Learning to Argue and Arguing to Learn in EFL Writing Instruction: A Classroom Inquiry,” set in China at the university level, Min Zou, Xiaohui Li, and Icy Lee examine how a sequence of nine argument-focused activities designed to internalize argument schema and provide experience with inquiry helped students learn to argue and argue to learn. Through engagement with inquiry into intriguing easy-to-relate-to problems, Zou, Li, and Lee’s approach appears to offer the possibility of heightening both cognition and motivation at the same time. Also in China, but in a high school setting, Qiling Wu and Zehang Chen’s chapter (“An Action Research Study Aimed at Improving Chinese High School Students’ Argumentation in EFL Writing”) looks at the value of a two-phased series of classroom activities focused on learning to reason and then learning to argue, in other words, teaching reasoning, or logic, first, followed by written argument construction. The outcome of their action research has persuaded Wu and Chen that high school is not too soon to introduce Chinese students to L2 argumentation, and even as challenging a concept as counterargument can be effectively taught. At a university in Argentina, Natalia Dalla Costa addressed the particular challenges that source-based argumentative writing poses to even advanced language learners in “The Argumentative Essay from Multiple

Sources: Genre-Based Instruction to Foster Autonomy in EFL Academic Literacy.” These challenges were met with a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) genre-based approach, using the SFL scaffolded teaching-learning cycle of guided, collaborative, and increasingly more independent activities, which was found to have quite positive effects not only on writing performance but also on student attitudes and confidence in their abilities.

The final two chapters in Part Two, and this volume, both present promising ways forward to developing L2 argumentation abilities by offering learners innovative opportunities for increased learner autonomy. In their chapter on undergraduate English for academic purposes instruction (EAP) at an EMI (English medium of instruction) university in Hong Kong (“Argumentative Writing at the Tertiary Level: Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions of a Hybrid Approach”), Lucas Kohnke and Frankie Har describe an integrated five-input hybrid approach to teaching argumentation consisting of videos, quizzes, reflections, peer review, and face-to-face instruction. According to Kohnke and Har, especially effective were the short out-of-class online activities, a menu of videos on argumentative-writing-related topics for just-in-time learning accompanied by online quizzes for self-testing, which together motivated learners to do the activities multiple times to deepen their understanding. In a quite different setting, undergraduate L2 writing classes for foreign language education majors in Turkey (“Analysis of Pre-service Teachers’ Reflective Journals: Learning-to-argue through Writing about Writing”), Lisy Seloni and Nur Yiğitoğlu Aptoula found another means of heightening learner autonomy and, hence, consolidating L2 argumentation learning—namely, with writing-about-writing journals. By reflecting on themselves as developing L2 argumentative writers, the journal writers were able to increase their metacognition and sense of themselves as maturing critical thinkers, while at the same time providing their instructors with a window on their struggles and progress. Pre-service language teachers such as those described by Seloni and Yiğitoğlu Aptoula, trained to be reflective on their own practice as L2 writers, may be especially well poised to help new generations of novice L2 writers meet the challenges of argumentation.

Closing Comments

Our hope in assembling this collection is that it helps lend coherence to the L2 writing field’s treatment of argumentative writing. Quality scholarship on L2 argumentative writing is not lacking. Valuable articles and conference presentations have been appearing with increasing frequency. However, as

noted earlier, such writing—the teaching and learning of it—has not been addressed in any collective sense, and if argumentation in the L2 writing field is to gain the momentum it needs to move forward in meaningful ways, we need occasions where there is a gathering together of insights from research and practice, especially as we engage a new multimodal turn in academic literacy through which argumentation can be approached. The contributors to this volume have enabled us to view L2 argumentative writing instruction from multiple vantage points while also enabling us to provide a sustained focus on argumentation that has been missing in L2 scholarship up to now. We see the authors' combined efforts as a starting point in a more comprehensive and cohesive treatment of argumentation that we believe the L2 writing field needs at this point in its own development.

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