

## Preface

### Overview and Rationale

This book on journal writing is for teachers in second and foreign language education who wish to understand the many uses of journal writing in teaching, learning, and research in second language (L2) education. It brings together three perspectives on journal writing that are ordinarily treated separately in books and articles: (1) journal writing for learners of second and foreign languages at different proficiency levels; (2) journal writing as a multipurpose learning tool for teacher development; and (3) journal writing for teachers who wish to use journals as part of their classroom research and publication. The book reviews literature in each of these areas; provides examples of journal writing for teaching, learning, and research; poses questions for discussion; and suggests activities for practice.

Several assumptions underlie the ideas in this book: Regular risk-free writing can potentially promote language development and writing improvement; reflection on the self, on subject matter, and on one's learning processes can contribute to a journal writer's agency, autonomy, depth of engagement, and personal and intellectual development; and journal writing can contribute to authentic and personalized communication between teachers and learners and among learners.

Some of the questions that the book addresses are: What are the common characteristics of journals? What different kinds of journals are there, and what are their purposes and characteristics? What are the common issues that language teachers face as they decide whether and how to use journals? In what ways have journals been used to benefit the linguistic, intel-

lectual, and personal growth of journal writers? Can journals be used at any proficiency level and with different age groups? What practical issues arise in implementing journal writing practices in L2 classes and in language teacher education classes (e.g., confidentiality, time, class size)? What are the arguments for and against assigning topics, error correction of journals, grading and evaluation, and other requirements? What connections can be made between journal writing and more formal academic writing? How do teachers deal with student resistance, or with their own resistance to writing journals? In what ways can journals written and used by those in language teacher education programs and researchers contribute to projects on language development and writing development? What caveats must we consider about journal writing, and what questions remain unanswered?

Many of these issues have been considered in other publications, but none brings them together in an authored book for the purposes of presenting them under one cover to readers in second and foreign language education programs. The multifaceted approach of this book will benefit not only students of L2 writing in language teacher education programs and novice practicing teachers, but also experienced teachers who may wish to initiate or expand journal writing practices in their own classes or to explore ways to use journal writing as part of master's level or doctoral research. The book thus provides an overview of the many uses of journal writing in language education and simultaneously functions as a resource for specific uses and interests that individual language and writing teachers may have.

### Type of Book

*Journal Writing in Second Language Education* is a professional book designed primarily for use in M.A. TESOL or applied linguistics programs that prepare teachers and researchers for work in second and foreign language contexts. Other teachers and researchers whose students include multilingual speak-

ers and writers will also benefit from this book. It is likely to be used as a supplemental rather than a main text in teacher education classes. It could, however, be used as one of several main texts in some classes, such as *Methods of Teaching, Practicum, Second Language Writing, Classroom Research, Literacy in a Second Language, and Professional Development of Language Teachers*. It has enough practical advice and questions for reflection to appeal to individual language teachers as well.

The book has the following distinguishing features:

- It is written specifically for teachers working with multilingual students and for teachers who are studying their own language learning and teaching, although it can be used by other teachers as well.
- It is organized so that readers can easily locate chapters that pertain to their particular interests.
- Each main chapter begins with several extended examples of actual journal use. The examples provide a better entry into how journals can be used than does a how-to list and thus constitute the core of each chapter.
- It provides thought-provoking questions for class discussion or individual rumination (or journal writing!) as well as practical suggestions in each chapter.
- It targets an audience of both novice and experienced teachers in second language education by presenting issues in an accessible way but that challenges experienced teachers to go beyond the rather simplistic view of journal writing that has become lore in the L1-L2 writing field.
- It addresses questions about electronic/online journal writing.
- It introduces novice researchers of writing to uses of journal writing as a research tool.
- Unlike other books on journal writing, this one employs a perspective-taking approach by asking writing teachers to consider how journal writing might be used in their own L2 learning and intellectual and personal growth, in addition to those of their students.

- It offers caveats, cautions, and unanswered questions as essential for writing teachers to consider.
- The chapters include discussion question and suggestions for activities.

The book has seven chapters. The introductory chapter covers common characteristics and uses of journals, describes types of journals, discusses the contentious topic of responding to journals, and highlights some issues requiring decision-making by teachers. These include using free topics versus assigned topics, targeting fluency or accuracy, correcting errors or not, grading and evaluating, and privacy issues. The second, third, and fourth chapters focus on journal writing for teachers of low-proficiency multilingual learners, intermediate-proficiency learners, and advanced learners. The fifth chapter is for teachers-in-preparation who may be using journals in teacher education courses and in practice teaching, and for experienced teachers who are pursuing further professional development. A sixth chapter concerns how journals can be used by teachers for research purposes. A final chapter discusses ongoing issues and questions and includes caveats and cautions. Following the format of some of the other books in the Multilingual Writers Series, each chapter includes preview questions, references to relevant literature, examples and discussion of points, summaries of main points, and chapter-end questions and activities for consideration in readers' local contexts. The chapters can be read in any order, but the introduction and concluding chapters provide a background that can frame the rest of the chapters. References and other relevant resources are included at the end of the book.

### Using This Book

*Journal Writing in Second Language Education* will be most useful for readers who are teaching classes in which students write journals, who are currently themselves writing journals such as language learner diaries or learning logs in master's classes,

or who are doing classroom research that involves journal writing. The introductory and concluding chapters might profitably be read first, with the remaining chapters selected according to the reader's needs and interests.

Of the many discussions about journal writing that can be valuable, three stand out in my mind as particularly important. First, many unresolved issues about journal writing need to be considered in some depth (see the first and last chapters), and the best way to do this is to write out one's ideas and talk about them with others. Second, journals are often used to record writers' teaching, learning, and researching experiences and their reflections on those experiences. As teachers, learners, and researchers in second language education, all of us can benefit from sharing these reflections with others, on the understanding that the writer's privacy is respected. The issue of privacy is particularly sensitive in Web-based journals and blogs or in situations where a teacher requires that paper or electronic journals be shared in class. Third, teachers who use journals would wisely consider writing along with their students, in their own L2 if possible. It is quite astonishing what we can learn about our own teaching when we try to do the assignments that we give to students.

Finally, for those readers who are, or become, convinced that journal writing is the best thing since apple pie, I add only that it cannot be all things to all people. Journal writing forms only a part of good teaching, learning, and researching. I urge journal writing enthusiasts to avoid this bandwagon (and others as well) and to constantly review, with a critical eye, the roles that journal writing plays in their lives and work. This means continuing to read about, reflect on, and reinvent how journals can be used. Journal writing has tremendous potential in language learning and teaching, writing development, professional development, and language education research. Nevertheless, teachers and researchers who write journals, who assign journal writing tasks, and who use journals for research purposes will wisely ask questions about journal writing practices that pertain to their particular purposes and contexts.