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A Book Review on Learner Identity and Beliefs in EFL Writing

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The focus of the TESOL field has shifted from theoretical abstractions to studying individuals as the raw material within its social context, and as a result, autonomy, agency, learner beliefs, and identity have recently become crucial topics (Alhamami, 2019; Aliakbari & Amiri, 2018; Majchrzak, 2020; Mercer 2012; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Takkac Tulgar, 2019). With this tendency in the field, empirical studies, especially qualitative studies, gained more importance. *Learner Identity and Learner Beliefs in EFL Writing* by Olga Majchrzak is a useful inquiry-based book that brings together some of these research studies on learner identity and beliefs specifically in writing. This edited book was published in 2018 as one of the books in the series of Second Language Learning and Teaching edited by Miroslav Pawlak. The book focuses on learner identity in foreign language writing as well as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' beliefs and attitudes regarding writing skill. While the author explores the views of the learners regarding both native language (L1) and target language (L2) writing through a rigorous examination of learner identities, she also discusses L1 writing skill effect on L2 writing process and compares L1 and L2 writing processes. This book has six chapters focusing on EFL learner characteristics, beliefs, and identity, comparison and analysis of student beliefs and attitudes towards L1 and L2 writing, and analysis of learner identity in L1 and L2 writing.

The main difference between this book and the previous books is that Olga Majchrzak starts with her own experiences in teaching writing, explores learners' reasons in their language preferences of writing, and then she presents studies to explain whether L1 or L2 attitudes affect learners' writing skills. Thus, this book is a practical textbook that could be used by students and researchers focusing on writing and also by writing instructors who would like to have class discussions on how students' identities and beliefs would affect their writing abilities and skills.

They could also make use of this book to identify their students' needs and expectations, as student cases are exemplified throughout the book.

Chapter 1, *Theorising the EFL Learner: A Bilingual Perspective*, mainly focuses on bilingualism in school context from an educational perspective. After defining what bilingualism is, Majchrzak concentrates on fluency, language use, second language acquisition (SLA) and language domains as the main traits of the bilinguals. Certain terminologies and concepts, including multicompetence, a dynamic model of bilingualism, and dynamic systems theory are explained in detail to demonstrate a clear picture of the perceptions on bilingualism. Then, the author explains the aspects of bilingualism with a focus on English as a Lingua Franca, code-switching, and translanguaging. Through the end of this chapter, the author narrows down the main characteristics of the bilinguals regarding their cognitive abilities, mental representations, emotions, constantly changing identities and their roles in school context.

Chapter 2, *Towards a Bilingual Writer: The Beliefs and the Process of L2 Writing*, starts with the general perspectives on teaching and learning processes, and then, the focus shifts to the teachers' and learners' beliefs in writing. The chapter touches upon the long-term debate on L1 interference in L2 writing processes. First, Majchrzak explains the similarities and differences of L1 and L2 writing processes such as planning, revision, transcription, and translation. Then, she continues with expounding the factors influencing L1 use in L2 writing process and domains of L2 as well as the extent of the use and its impact on the text quality. The chapter ends with insights on a multicompetent bilingual writer.

In Chapter 3, *Identity in L2 Writing*, Majchrzak provides an insight on the historical concept of identity and clarifies how identity in L2 writing is constructed. As many scholars consider the transformation of the self is inevitable while learning an L2 (Block, 2007; Byram,

1990; Granger, 2004), she pays extra attention to the notion of the transformation of the self. The relationship between writing and identity is established through the references to the valuable publications (Cozart & Jensen, 2014; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Li, 2007; Yang, 2013). Finally, the concept of voice in L2 writing is described considering classroom settings.

With Chapter 4, *Analysis of Students' Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Writing in L1 (Polish) and L2 (English)*, Majchrzak switches to empirical studies. She examines students' beliefs and attitudes towards writing in their mother language, Polish, and the target language, English, along with references to the other studies in the book. The study in the chapter focuses on the differences in Polish and English in terms of M.A. and B.A. students' attitudes towards the experience of writing as well as investigating which language the participants prefer while writing journals. In addition, the extent of teacher involvement in writing process is also discussed in terms of promoting L1.

Chapter 5, *Analysis of Students' L1 and L2 Writing Processes*, is the second empirical research study in which L1 and L2 writing processes are analyzed through the questions focusing on whether students approach both languages in similar ways or they transfer their knowledge into the other one. Differing from the previous chapter, this study focuses on participants' way of perceiving and approaching the task, and the difficulties they experience during the process of writing in both languages. Majchrzak also provides learners' comments after their journal entries in both languages to exemplify what she claims in the chapter.

Chapter 6, *Analysis of Students' Identity in L1 and L2 Writing*, the last chapter of the book, describes a study involving the participants who participated in the study mentioned in the previous chapter. First, Majchrzak illustrates how advanced EFL students perceive writing in two languages. Then, she describes how they can make use of L2 to create an L2 self while writing.

The second part of this study focuses on the metaphors that are based on the learner conversations gathered in the previous chapter. It is reported that the comments in the conversations led to four metaphors: language as a protective shield, language as a doorway to new opportunities, language as a tool to organize one's thoughts, and language as a tool to create a new self. Through these metaphors, respectively, the author delves more into the learners' emotions, the opportunities they have through L2, the way they organize their thoughts in L2, and how they use L2 while creating a new self.

The flow of the book is so well designed that readers would never feel lost regardless of the level of expertise, and therefore, it keeps readers engaged throughout the chapters. However, it might have been helpful if there were some discussion questions and activities leading to critical thinking at the end of each chapter to have the readers make comments and comprehend the issues explained more thoroughly. This would also help instructors and professors using this book as a textbook at graduate-level courses; it would yield good quality in-class and online discussions. Another point that might have some room for improvement is adding a reference list and appendices at the end of each chapter besides the appendices at the very end of the book because some chapters can be used as standalone resources in teaching writing. In a nutshell, the book explains the connection between L1 and L2 in writing processes and the aspect to these processes in detail. This makes the book quite engaging, and therefore, it is hard to take a break while reading this valuable contribution to the field.

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