Toward a design approach to foreign language writing instruction

Heather W. Allen
Lauren Goodspeed, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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TOWARD A DESIGN APPROACH TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTION

HEATHER WILLIS ALLEN hwallen@wisc.edu
LAUREN GOODSPEED goods056@umn.edu
WRITING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

- Lower priority element of FL education for students, instructors, & in teacher PD (Magnan, Murphy, Sahakyan, & Kim, 2012; Mills & Moulton, 2017)

- L2 writing theory / instructional practice gap in US collegiate FL programs (Allen, 2018; Lefkowitz, 2011)
“Design has to do with the conception, planning, and shaping of some artifact for some intended purpose … design focuses our attention on creative human processes … [and] signifies the products of those processes … design involves the interaction of material resources, social resources, and individual resources—and reciprocally produces new resources for future acts of design.”

(Kern, 2015, p. 2)
5 ELEMENTS OF A DESIGN APPROACH

- **Available Designs**: awareness-raising of the varied FL resources needed to create a text (Kern, 2000, 2015)
- **Intertextuality**: sensitization to genre conventions through reading-to-write activities (Allen & Goodspeed, 2018; Goodspeed, 2018; Maxim, 2009)
- **Multimodality**: interactions among linguistic & non-linguistic elements in texts (Kern, 2000; NCTE, 2016)
- **Perspective-taking**: point-of-view shifting, trying on new identities (Kearney, 2016)
- **Collaboration**: social interaction & feedback on the process & product of writing (Kalantzis, Cope, Chan, & Dalley-Trim, 2016)
How might a design approach contribute to learners’ FL literacies?
BENEFITS OF A DESIGN APPROACH: DEVELOPING AVAILABLE DESIGNS

“When students are given a prompt and said ‘Okay, write this!’ but they don’t have anything to work off of, it’s impossible, and that’s when students resort to using Google Translate or creating something very--um--bad (laughs).

So having a text to work off of … it’s a great tool. … These activities really help them not only to understand the model text and its content but how is the content communicated within this genre and they can gain tools in terms of language, in terms of format on the page

… but it needs to be a little guided. They need the activities to go along with it in order for them to be able to find those tools that they can then use to recreate.” (Kaitlin, French TA, Writing Workshop Interview 2)
“I think we communicate pretty similarly as far as how laid back it kind of was in a respectful way for the roommate ad, and how professional it was for the cover letter. ...I think that the borrowed text helped me make it to the level of professional or not professional that it needed to be.”

(Leigh, French student, Learning Outcomes Interview)
BENEFITS OF A DESIGN APPROACH: LEARNING THROUGH INTERTEXTUALITY

“You’re using a text kind of like … as a tool kit for different words and expressions that … you wouldn’t know necessarily at a [first-year] level. That you would really only grasp from reading an authentic text or an original document in the language. So it’s a way of elevating [learners’] language beyond what they already know.” (Meghan, French TA, Writing Workshop Interview 1)

Seeing someone else's writing, it made me more confident. If someone else can do it, then I can do it. Breaking it down was probably the biggest thing. (Julia, French student, Learning Outcomes Interview)
BENEFITS OF A DESIGN APPROACH: LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION

Creating a “recipe” for a roommate ad:

“I let them do this in pairs, so they just talked in English to their partner... That’s when things started to click. They were saying stuff like, ‘well, I think that they should actually put the budget—if I were doing it, I would make the budget come before my personality because I think people think that that’s more important information when they’re reading my texts’ or they were saying, ‘I think I would leave personality for the very end because ... it’s more important.’” (Sadie, French TA, Writing Workshop Interview 1)
PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Learner challenges:**
  - working with textual models

- **Instructor challenges:**
  - creating instructional activities
  - providing appropriate scaffolding
  - developing conceptual underpinnings

- Need for professional development related to FL writing

- Potential for literacy development among FL learners
REFERENCES

