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Series Editors: Colin Baker and Nancy Hornberger

Reflections on Multiliterate Lives

Edited by

Diane Belcher and Ulla Connor

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Editors' Introduction

A second generation American, **Diane Belcher** began her career in TESOL as a teacher of English literature and composition in the People's Republic of China. She received her BA in English from George Washington University and her MA and Ph.D., also in English, from The Ohio State University, where she is currently director of the ESL Composition Program. She serves as co-editor of the journal *English for Specific Purposes* as well as co-editor of the Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers (University of Michigan Press). She has also co-edited several books: *Academic Writing in a Second Language: Essays on Research and Pedagogy* (1995) and *Linking Literacies: Perspectives on L2 Reading-Writing Connections* (2001). A former chair of the TOEFL Test of Written English Committee, she is now a member of the TOEFL Committee of Examiners.



Born and raised in Finland, **Ulla Connor** received her BA and MA in English language and literature from the University of Helsinki and her second MA, in comparative literature, from the University of Wisconsin, where she also received her Ph.D. in education and English linguistics. She has taught ESL/EFL and applied linguistics for the past thirty years in the US, Finland, Sweden, Japan, Venezuela and Slovakia, and has lectured at universities around the world. Her research has been on L2 reading and writing, with special emphasis on cross-cultural aspects and contrastive rhetoric. Her current interests are EAP (English for academic purposes) and ESP, especially the language of business and nonprofit organizations. She has edited and authored a number of books, including *Contrastive Rhetoric: Crosscultural Aspects of Second Language Writing* (1996). She is also the author of close to 100 articles and book chapters.



In planning this book, eighteen highly successful second-language users were asked to outline in their own words their struggles and successes along the path to language learning. The result is a volume in which the contributors, using interview as well as narrative formats, compellingly recount their formative literacy experiences, with the aim of helping others to understand better how advanced second-language literacy can be achieved.

In many respects, all the contributors to this volume are 'fortunate travelers', to borrow the term that Suresh Canagarajah himself borrows from Derek Walcott for the title of his narrative. Both physically and mentally, the contributors have traveled great distances to arrive at their wished-for destinations. Robert Agunga, for example, now a professor of agriculture, still keenly recollects his early childhood marches of a dozen miles daily through Ghanaian forest to attend a village elementary school. Jun Liu, now a professor of English, remembers surreptitiously reading, when he was growing up in China, the English-language books hidden under his family's beds for fear of a sudden 'revolutionary inspection' by Red Guards. María Juliá, currently a professor of social work, still finds it painful to recall her early days of graduate study in the US as a new arrival from Puerto Rico – days marred by the anxiety of constant translation, sleep deprivation, and lost opportunities to interact with others. All of our contributors, in fact, eloquently articulate similarly vivid recollections of earlier selves that they obviously value, memories that may well continue to help shape their present-day achievements (see Ross & Buehler, 1994).

Though well aware of how far they have come, none of the contributors, according to their own self reports, feels able or willing to now comfortably sit back and contentedly survey all that s/he has achieved. Ming-Daw Tsai, for instance, whose extensive scientific writing in English has garnered numerous grants, special honors and appointments on editorial boards, remarks that he still feels the need to put every paper he writes 'through at least ten rounds of revision before submission'. Miyuki Sasaki observes of herself that, despite the accomplishment of annually publishing in highly respected English-language journals for a number of years, she is still not comfortable composing in English: 'I think in Japanese, take notes in Japanese, and write the first rough drafts in Japanese because I can't think thoroughly about any complicated matters in English'. Some of the contributors who now live in English-speaking environs also regret and worry over first language loss resulting from greatly diminished contact and use. María Juliá is appalled by the Spanish-usage errors her mother finds in her letters home because, as Juliá explains, 'I was always very proud of how well I could write in my first language'. Anahid Kulwicki finds that the

hectic pace of her life as an academic in the US leaves no time for the Armenian and Arabic literature that she loved as a girl in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the contributors to this volume, all extraordinarily productive scholars and teachers with well-established reputations in their fields, are clearly not significantly hampered by feelings of inadequacy, frustration, or loss. They are, rather, notably aware and indeed appreciative of where they have been and where they are going, conscious of how the world, especially an English-dominated academic world, has impinged on them but also of how they have responded to it and, through their linguistic expertise and finely honed literate practices, put their own imprint on it.

Our contributors are precisely the types of 'multicompetent' language users, successful users of more than one language, that Vivian Cook (1999) has argued researchers and teachers of language need to know far more about, and students of language need to have more exposure to. Research, after all, has tended to focus on what language learners lack rather than on what they have achieved. And our classrooms, Cook reminds us, have too seldom provided second language (L2) students with access to examples of skilled L2 use. The collection of personal accounts of the formative literacy experiences of highly successful – both linguistically and professionally – L2 users assembled in this volume should help address the needs expressed by Cook and certainly felt by many others. The contributors to this volume, who are well known L2 specialists in applied linguistics and the teaching of English as well as L2 academic writers from the physical and social sciences, represent a broad spectrum of linguistic and academic accomplishments. The language educators who have contributed provide both a personal and, at the same time, linguistically informed view of language learning by reflecting on their own language and literacy experiences. The contributors from other disciplines share their insider awareness of what it takes to attain and sustain literacy in fields that those of us who specialize in teaching academic literacy can usually view only from the outside. Since all of the contributions have been authored, or co-authored in the case of interviews, by L2 users themselves, the array of accomplished multiliterates' language-learning reflections presented here appears in their own words. Thus, the contributors have constructed their own representations of themselves.

The value of the type of autobiographical narrative, or auto-ethnography, provided by our contributors has received increasing recognition over the past few decades from both researchers and teachers. From the point of view of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, autobiographies (or another variant called 'diary studies') are seen as providing windows on learners' metalinguistic awareness, capable of telling us much about

their conscious use of language-learning strategies (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983). From the teachers' point of view, narratives can be a powerful teaching tool, in that they are highly accessible, easy to relate to and, when either read or written, can increase learners' awareness of their own learning processes (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Bell, 1997).

Further evidence of the growing recognition of the value of narrative can be found in the wealth of recently published collections of narratives in L1 and L2 studies recounting the experiences of language educators and writing teachers, e.g. Casanave & Schecter (1997) *On Becoming a Language Educator*; Meyer (1996) *Stories from the Heart*; Roen et al. (1999) *Living Rhetoric and Composition*, and Trimmer (1997) *Narration as Knowledge*. All of these collections are rich sources of data on the language teaching experience. The second-language learning experience has been the focus of a number of essays that present first-person accounts of language learners who are also language specialists, e.g. Bell (1995), Campbell (1996), Connor (1999), and Shen (1989). There are also compelling book-length first-person accounts of second-language learners, some of which have been authored by language specialists who are language learners, such as Ogulnick (1998) *Onna Rashiku [Like a Woman]* and Lvovich (1997) *The Multilingual Self*, and others of which have come from outside the education field, such as Hoffman (1989) *Lost in Translation* and Liu (1984) *Two Years in the Melting Pot*. All of these narratives offer thick description of the emotional peaks and valleys of language learning and teaching that no one knows more intimately than the language learner or teacher her/himself.

One of our primary aims in this book has been to widen the range of voices available in published language-learning narratives by including contributions from representatives of a wide range of academic disciplines as well as linguistic and educational backgrounds. The multicompetent language users in language education and other academic fields that we have invited to contribute to this volume have lived and worked in core English-speaking countries, e.g. Australia and the US, in the 'periphery,' e.g. Hong Kong, and in EFL (English as a foreign language) environments, such as Japan and Finland. We have also included one L1 English speaker who has functioned professionally as an academic in another language, Hebrew, in a country, Israel, where English is not the dominant language. When we chose potential contributors, we also kept gender representation in addition to distribution of L1/L2s and geographic locations in mind in an effort to select a group of women and men representative of the global academic community. The world represented by our contributors, in terms of their countries of origin, includes the following: Austria, China (PRC and

ROC), Finland, France, Ghana, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mexico, Sri Lanka, and the US (with Puerto Rico included).

Our hope is that students, teachers and others who read the highly personalized, often poignant accounts of our diverse group of contributors will have little difficulty in appreciating their past and present struggles and successes, and in recognizing our contributors' obvious strengths (which include admissions of weakness) as remarkably self-aware learners of language and of much else. That so many of the multicompetent language users represented here have attained so many of their goals in life, already having achieved what relatively few monoliterates accomplish in their entire lifetimes, suggests not just that these particular multiliterate individuals are unusually high achievers but also argues compellingly, we feel, for the inherent values of multiliteracy.

Overview

Our book is divided into two sections: Part I, consisting of narratives by professional language educators, and Part II, narratives (some in interview format) from professional academics representing disciplines across the curriculum. These two sections have somewhat different organizing principles owing to the varied nature of their components.

Since all the contributors in Part I, as language educators, share essentially the same discipline (a domain that includes specialists with backgrounds in linguistics, literature, and teacher training), we have organized this section along nation- (or region-) of-origin lines. In other words, language educators from the same part of the world appear side by side, allowing for differing, often complementary perspectives on the same or similar cultures of origin (or C1). Thus, we begin with an American-educated Sri Lankan, followed by a British-educated Indian; then two Finns of different generations; followed by an Austrian and a Lithuanian, both of whom immigrated, the former to Australia, the latter to Israel, and an American of Russian heritage who also immigrated to Israel; finally two Japanese and one Chinese, with the former currently residing in different nations, one in the US and the other in Japan, and the latter, the Chinese academic, currently living in the US.

Part II, which is organized along disciplinary lines, moves from the physical and mathematical sciences to the social sciences, and finally concludes with academics who have crossed over into administration and reached the pinnacle of professional university life, as presidents of their institutions. More specifically, the progression in Part II is as follows (with contributors here identified by their C1 and discipline): a Chinese bio-

chemist, a French mathematician, an Iranian electrical engineer, a Lebanese nursing educator, a Ghanaian agricultural communication specialist, a Puerto Rican social work researcher, and two university presidents, Mexican and German. While all of the above now reside in the continental US, they still, as will be seen in their personal accounts, proudly identify themselves as products of their C1, e.g. as Chinese or Ghanaian or Mexican.

The diverse range of contributors should, it seems to us, make it abundantly clear to all who read this collection of life stories that (1) no C1, no matter how apparently distant from the target culture, should be perceived as an obstacle to success in that culture (in fact, quite the reverse, as some argue in this volume, since awareness of difference can be a source of strength that those without the lived experience of difference lack), and (2) no discipline should be seen as out of reach for L2 users, for highly successful L2 academics can be found across the curriculum.

Part I

Having worked as a professional academic both in his home country and in the United States, **Suresh Canagarajah**, whose narrative 'The Fortunate Traveler: Shuttling Between Communities and Literacies by Economy Class' opens this section, is able to present a dual perspective on L2 academic literacy training and experiences that may challenge some readers' notions of literacy objectives. After struggling to master the discourse expectations of his American professors and succeeding as a graduate student as few L1 speakers of English do, with articles accepted by several prestigious journals, Canagarajah returned home to discover he had become an outsider. When his efforts to produce academic prose in Tamil were met by disappointment in his 'pompous' and 'over-confident' style', Canagarajah consciously readjusted his style yet again so as not to 'put off' his readers. Upon returning to the US to teach, Canagarajah faced new complaints about what some perceived as an overly passionate style, a reaction possibly to his 'flirtations with vernacular [Tamil] academic writing' or perhaps evidence that 'issues of tone and style could have ideological implications'. Well aware of the advantages of academic life in the US, Canagarajah now feels that the conveniences of affluent, high-tech US life have made him 'intellectually and rhetorically lazy', while the competitiveness of 'publish or perish' American academia has taken much of the pleasure out of the writing process. Canagarajah's reflections thus give us much to reflect on. Should, Canagarajah leads us to wonder, academic literacy mean far more for citizens of the world than merely mastering the survival strategies required in one's degree- or tenure-granting institution?

Canagarajah makes us mindful that, despite the onslaught of English in disciplines around the world, there are other academic worlds beyond the English-dominated one – with their own sets of norms and priorities. To be truly academically literate, Canagarajah suggests, means being able to reach the audiences one chooses to reach, utilizing ‘available conventions and discourses from the standpoint of one’s [own] ideological and rhetorical preferences’.

Although **Vijay Bhatia** is from the same part of the world as Suresh Canagarajah, namely, the postcolonial Asian subcontinent, Bhatia traveled a very different route to L2 academic literacy. In ‘Initiating into Academic Community: Some Autobiographical Reflections’ Bhatia recounts his intellectual and psychosocial journey from India to Great Britain, from the perspective of his current professional academic life in Hong Kong. Unlike Canagarajah, Bhatia focuses much more on academic socialization than on academic literacy *per se*. In his account of admittedly fortuitous life events, Bhatia underscores the importance of situated learning, or serving a sociocognitive apprenticeship. To Bhatia, finding one’s niche, by which he means both the right academic field for one’s talents and interests and the right community of scholars to apprentice oneself to, is more important than any cross-linguistic or cross-cultural issues. Bhatia feels that, ideally, learning is not confined by the walls of an institution of higher learning but is ‘an ongoing process, which could take place anywhere, on a cricket field, or in front of the TV in a video room while watching Wimbledon finals’. Bhatia observes that friendly and relaxed contact with academic professionals, who gave him the opportunity to disagree and think for himself, enabled him to develop the habits of mind essential to success on his own terms. Such mental habits no doubt served Bhatia well as a junior professional academic in his determination to resist an editor’s attempts to change his phrasing – a battle that Bhatia won and which further empowered him. Bhatia does not argue that language use is never an issue for NNSEs (non-native speakers of English), but that academic gatekeepers can make it more of one than it should be. He urges fellow NNSEs not to allow concerns about their L2 competence to discourage or distract them from the exercise of their academic expertise that will truly qualify them for professional academe.

With **Nils Erik Enkvist**’s ‘Reminiscences of a Multilingual Life’, we enter into the realm of those who lead bi- and multilingual private and professional lives in their home countries. Finland’s best-known applied linguist and truly an international scholar, having lectured and published around the world in English and other languages, Enkvist presents an account of literacy development that began in pre-World War II Finland,

when French and German, not English, were the dominant European languages. A maverick in his youth, Enkvist was one of the few students of English linguistics in Finland to seek language experience in the US and the UK. But what will perhaps appear most noteworthy about Enkvist to many mono- and bilingual readers is how normal it seems to Enkvist to have grown up and lived his adult life as a multilingual. With a Swedish-speaking father and Finnish-speaking mother, as well as numerous other language-learning experiences, including German, French, English, Estonian, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian and Danish, Enkvist's usual response to queries about how many languages he speaks is '... unless you define what you mean by "knowing" a language, choose any number between three and something like a dozen...'. For Enkvist, being multilingual is so natural that there is no reason to fear loss of one's 'native' identity. His description of 'personality switching' reveals not a static, unitary identity but rather a dynamic sense of self that seems quite postmodernist:

People often ask if I change personality when switching from one language to another. Yes, I do. In Finnish I am an honest straightforwardly homely down-to-earth person, occasionally digging into the politer layers of a wartime military substratum of language. In Swedish I am pedantic and, also, sound precisely like the academic administrator I used to be. And in English, a language I originally learned through formal education, I am stuck with an RP variant, which strikes today's Britons as a relic from high society in the days of Edward VII.

A lifelong student of stylistics, which Enkvist believes can be universally defined, his own elegant and witty English prose is testimony both to his understanding of style and his achievements as a multiliterate.

If Nils Enkvist's narrative projects the development of personal multiliteracy as an enjoyable journey, **Håkan Ringbom's** reflections in 'Developing Literacy Can and Should be Fun – But Only Sometimes Is' makes the pain and hard work of the development process conspicuous. A student of Enkvist and an internationally known scholar in his own right, Ringbom, who came of age in post-World War II Finland, is more interested in linguistic difference (or relativity) than in stylistic universals but, like his teacher Enkvist, he is also an astute observer of his own experiences with language. Ringbom has observed that, despite the relatively privileged status of the Swedish minority in Finland, his fellow Swedish Finns are very much aware of their language minority status and choose carefully when and where to use Swedish. Ringbom is conscious of the impact his

Swedish has had on his use of Finnish, noting that it was many years before the 'flexibility and beauty' of Finnish 'dawned' on him. Although a native-like speaker of Finnish, Ringbom feels less confident as a writer of Finnish. But writing, Ringbom observes, has never been easy for him, and learning to write academic English was an especially arduous process:

When writing my first postgraduate thesis [in English] ... I reckoned that the result of half a working day was only two or three sentences most days during two years.... And at least one of the sentences I had produced I deleted or altered considerably the following day. Yet, the result of my labors, qualitative and quantitative, bore very little witness to the time and energy spent.

Students and teachers of writing may find it heartening that, despite his struggles as a writer, Ringbom's written English has served him well as a professional academic. Ringbom himself now sees his having been forced to function in more than one language as a definite advantage: 'Language takes on a wider dimension and you ... become aware of the possibilities and restrictions each language [whether L1, L2, or L3] possesses'.

In 'Straddling Three Worlds', **Anna Söter** provides another European language speaker's perspective; however, as an immigrant to an English-speaking country, Australia, Söter's language learning and literacy experiences differed quite markedly from Enkvist's and Ringbom's. Söter's immersion into Australian English at age six led to immense success as an adult L2 user – an early career as a high school English literature teacher and eventually, a school administrator. It was not until she traveled to the US for graduate studies that she felt somewhat disadvantaged as a writer – perhaps because of her Australian variety of English, having been steeped in British literature, and some residual L1 (German) influence. Her writing style, 'a vehicle for success in Australian educational contexts', was a 'problem' in the US. Even though not perceived as a 'non-English speaker', Söter was forced to 'clean up' her academic writing in English. A more daunting challenge has been the effort to retain and develop her command of her L1. Like many first-generation immigrants, as a child Söter had wanted to blend in with the majority as quickly as possible, although parent-enforced correspondence with Austrian relatives enabled her to sustain a feeling of 'Austrian-ness' until she was able to return to her native country in her twenties. Developing her German literacy was, and continues to be, a struggle. Today Söter still finds that, while she can effortlessly converse in German, her dominant literacy experiences in English make it difficult 'without a great deal of work ... [to] maintain a line of unbroken thought [in written German] ... and appropriately express it in that language'.

Interestingly, the emotional power of her L1 has remained constant, for she still finds herself reaching for German words when engaged in creative writing in English. As a mature, accomplished adult, a tenured professor of English education living in the US, Söter values all her prior language experiences, especially that of her L1: 'If I have any advice to pass on to others, it is to accept the influence of one's mother tongue, embrace it and understand it, for in denying it, one denies a part of oneself'.

It is easy to see clear parallels between both Enkvist's and Ringbom's as well as Söter's language learning-experiences and those of **Adina Levine** as recounted in 'How a Speaker of Two Second Languages Becomes a Writer in a Foreign Language'. Growing up in Russian-dominated Lithuania, Levine found, as did Enkvist and Ringbom in Finland, the ability to speak and be literate in more than one language to be essential. Despite the imposition of Russian on her homeland, Levine's literacy in Russian led to an infatuation with Russian culture, especially Russian literature, that continues to have positive effects on her today. These happy early literacy experiences established a love of reading that, Levine is convinced, has buttressed all her subsequent literacy learning, no matter what the language. When she immigrated to Israel as an adult and was faced with the need to learn 'from scratch' a new 'second' language, Hebrew, as well as master a foreign language, English, because of 'the need "to compete" with native English speakers as my colleagues at work', Levine found that her lifelong interest in reading, especially her ability to read attentively and engage in more than simple decoding, helped her master the new academic English genres she needed to produce in order to survive professionally. Though the academic text types were new to her, textual analysis, thanks to her years of reading literature, was not. While Levine still feels not fully able to anticipate NSE (native speaker of English) reader response to her writing and 'a strong element of suspense when a manuscript is sent off for review', that feeling of uncertainty has never stopped her from writing and being published in English.

Although like Adina Levine's, **Andrew Cohen's** narrative, 'From L1 to L12: The Confessions of a Sometimes Frustrated Multiliterate' describes an adult language learner's immigration to Israel, Cohen, an American whose production of academic publications in English has continued unabated since early adulthood, focuses on acquisition of Hebrew for academic purposes. It should be noted that Cohen, the only L1 English speaker contributing to this collection of multiliteracy autobiographies, is a member of what is no doubt a quite small minority given the *Tyrannosaurus rex* nature of academic English worldwide (Swales, 1997) – NSEs who function as academics in a language other than English. Cohen is very straightforward

about his struggle to acquire academic Hebrew, which proved quite a formidable task despite his obvious talent and enthusiasm for languages and success in learning such non-Indo-European tongues as Quechua and Aymara. Cohen recounts a number of the strategies he developed in his efforts to cope with academic Hebrew, such as, reliance on Hebrew word processing and spell checking programs, compilation of a glossary of professional terminology for lectures in his field, reformulation of his Hebrew academic writing by Israeli colleagues to heighten his discursive consciousness, and pleasure reading in Hebrew to increase his reading speed. Cohen confesses, however, that even after sixteen years as an academic in Israel, reading an advisee's doctoral dissertation was still a challenge, and his academic speaking was perceived as 'an excellent example of a mixing of registers'. Upon finally returning to live in the US, Cohen himself was surprised by how appealing it was to be working again in an English-language environment, where he could comfortably and confidently function without excessive concern over sending or receiving the wrong message. It is difficult to read Cohen's narrative without being impressed, not only by his own academic career in Hebrew, but by the achievements of all who succeed as professional academics in a language other than their L1.

Ryuko Kubota is one of a number of East Asians living and working as professional academics in English-speaking countries, in her case the US. In 'My Experience of Learning to Read and Write in Japanese as L1 and English as L2', Kubota readily admits that reading and writing are for her still far more time-consuming and painstaking processes in English than in her native Japanese. Yet, that she has succeeded in accomplishing what she already has as a professional academic in English education – publishing in English and teaching in a tenure-track position at a prestigious American university – is largely owing, Kubota feels, to her early literacy experiences in Japanese. Having retained all of her childhood books and writings in Japanese, Kubota is able to vividly recount her L1 literacy training and development. What may strike readers as especially noteworthy are the great quantity and varied types of writing Kubota did as a child. As her private diaries and group anthologies at school suggest, personal expressive writing played a substantial and significant role in her youthful literacy. Kubota notes that one of the genres she practiced as a child, *seikatsu-bun*, or lived-experience writing, with its emphasis on observing human society and seeking ways to transform it, bears a striking similarity to Freirean pedagogy. Such literacy experiences may have predisposed Kubota toward the apparently Freire-inspired emancipatory interests that her academic work in English exhibits today. Kubota herself, however, is

not entirely satisfied with what she has accomplished so far as an L2 writer. She wishes that she could reveal in English more of her 'authentic voice,' yet is aware too, as a teacher of Japanese in the US, that the error density of 'authentic' writing can have a definite effect on readability – an awareness that makes her appreciative of feedback on her own L2 writing. Kubota concludes her narrative by pointedly warning us that her personal experiences and observations are not generalizable, situated as they are 'at a certain time and location'. She encourages 'continuous investigation' of the ever-changing literacy environment of her country of origin, Japan.

Whereas Ryuko Kubota has forged a professional academic life for herself in the US, **Miyuki Sasaki** returned to Japan to pursue an academic career after her graduate education in applied linguistics in the US. Being a professional academic in Japan, however, has not meant that she no longer works in English, as Sasaki feels compelled to continue to write academically in English in order to reach an international audience. One of the parallels between Sasaki's and Kubota's narratives that readers are likely to find of interest is the significance that both attribute to their early L1 literacy experiences. Like Kubota, Sasaki sees her childhood L1 literacy experiences as having an enormous influence on the scholar she is today. Sasaki credits her parents with providing a rich literacy-learning environment in their home, full of books and magazines, but also the example of parents who write. Some of the important formative experiences for the future biliterate academic also took place outside Japan – e.g. her year as an undergraduate exchange student at the University of Michigan, where she studied English composition and realized for the first time that writing is a learnable, improvable skill. Now as a gatekeeper of academic writing in English herself, i.e. a manuscript reviewer, Sasaki has discovered that 'even the most established researchers' drafts are not perfect when they are first submitted' and often undergo extensive revision before publication. Sasaki reveals much about her own L2 composing strategies in her narrative, e.g. that she finds L1 pleasure reading and writing a great restorative from the rigors of L2, and that, as mentioned earlier, her most productive conceptualizing still occurs in L1. After almost three decades of studying English, Sasaki still views academic work in L2 as a struggle, but one well worth the effort given the 'world of research' it has opened up to her.

Jun Liu's account in 'Writing from Chinese to English: My Cultural Transformation' of his early literacy experiences in his native People's Republic of China is so strikingly different from those of Miyuki Sasaki and Ryuko Kubota that the difficulty of attempting to draw conclusions about East Asian learners in general will likely be readily apparent. Liu's youth in

China took place during tumultuous times, the Cultural Revolution, when his English-teacher father was seen as 'one of the suspicious targets ... poisoned by Western thoughts and ... in possession of Western books'. Despite the danger involved, Liu and his sister, under their father's tutelage, engaged in the traditional Chinese practice of memorizing and reciting literary texts – including L2 texts well beyond what Krashen would call 'comprehensible input'. Liu is convinced of the lasting benefits, to both his L1 and L2, of his early literacy experiences, i.e. his early exposure and performance approach, not only to English literary works but to classical Chinese poetry and Beijing Opera as well. Although sidetracked for a time by a forced sojourn as a hospital lab technician, Liu eventually obtained a college education, but another decade passed before he was permitted to leave for graduate study in the US. Not until his graduate education did Liu feel that he had truly learned to write in English, thanks to the process approach of an ESL composition class, and not until he became an ESL composition instructor himself at a US university did he feel deservedly confident: 'for the first time in my life I felt that I was accepted as a member of the target community.' Liu sees himself as having benefited as a writer from his L2 social identity which, in turn, has benefited from his efforts to 'understand the fundamental thinking processes of the target culture and the way that my L1 culture can be accepted'.

Part II

The multi-disciplinary half of this volume opens with **Ming-Daw Tsai's** 'Learning as a Life-Long Process.' Although a Chinese speaker like Jun Liu, Tsai, who is from Taiwan, or the Republic of China, focuses far less than Liu on the early political and cultural influences on his literacy development. Tsai's story is that of steady, if not always smooth, progress towards success in the international scientific community. The point that Tsai stresses most emphatically in his narrative is that literate practices figure far more prominently in the life of a scientist than is likely realized by those outside the academic scientific professions. Having published over one hundred papers in chemistry and biochemistry, 'not a single one [of which] was written in Chinese', Tsai has found himself spending increasingly less time in the lab and more time in front of his computer, composing. That arriving at this high level of literate productivity was not an easy journey for Tsai is clear in his account of several unsettling discoveries made after arriving in the US for graduate study: that despite ten years of English study and a high TOEFL score, he lacked communicative competence, spoken and written, in English; and that, even after greatly improving his

communicative skills, he still lacked the ability, or at least the confidence, to lecture to large audiences and write research proposals independently. After years of practice as a speaker and writer of scientific English, Tsai is now confident in his abilities in these areas. He is pleased in particular with the results of, as described earlier, his multi-draft writing process but, outside the scientific milieu, Tsai feels less accomplished, noting that his children, raised in the US, read faster, write better (in English), and 'their speaking ability ... is something I will never reach in my life'. Yet Tsai is not sorry that he continues to feel the need to learn English, for it helps him avoid the trap of *ping-yong*, or passive contentment with mediocrity. As Tsai sees it, to continually learn English means to continually be in growth mode – both in terms of constant improvement of self-expression and of world knowledge.

As does Ming-Daw Tsai, **Louis de Branges** argues in his narrative 'Linguistic Expression of a Mathematical Career' that language is far more important in his field than is often realized. A French speaker till age nine, when he and his family took refuge from World War II France in the US, de Branges found that his struggle to master written English as an adolescent in an American school taught him to 'respect good writing in any language as a major achievement'. He notes too that his experiences as a bilingual reader while growing up actually led him to mathematics for, having learned 'through reading French [on his own] to read independently of instruction', he eagerly sought reading matter that captured his imagination. The realization of the importance of language to mathematics came to de Branges when he began his teaching career and found that all 'teaching is a challenge in the use of language', including the teaching of mathematics, which requires 'decoding a technical language of symbols and translating it into a verbal pattern'. As a mathematics textbook writer, de Branges has stayed true to his belief that 'words and ideas [should] dominate over symbols and formulas'. Now an internationally recognized professor of mathematics, de Branges remains intensely interested in undergraduate mathematics as a means of teaching 'logical thought [dependent] on words'. While de Branges sees himself as fortunate to be a speaker of 'the international language of mathematics, which is English', he also strongly believes that, without the experience of learning more than one language, he would have 'underestimated the value of language as opposed to symbols and formulas for the expression of mathematical ideas'.

For **Hooshang Hemami**, not just language but also the humanities in general are seen as crucial to success in his field. In 'Taking the Best From a Number of Worlds: An Interview with Hooshang Hemami', Hemami describes the foundations on which his career as a professor of electrical