



Institute for Language Education in  
Transcultural Context

# ACTFL 2023 Convention and World Languages Expo

November 17-19  
Chicago, IL

## Why Ask your Heritage Language Learners to Share their Work with the World?

Syelle Graves, PhD  
ILETC, The Graduate Center

Alberta Gatti, PhD  
ILETC, The Graduate Center

This project was partially funded by a grant from the U.S Department of  
Education



# Agenda



- Reasons to include a public audience
- Our WordPress website, *We Authors*
- How the site is used in teaching
- Learner feedback
- More questions and comments

# Reasons to Include a Public Audience

# Learn to Write



- Write to learn → practice linguistic forms and vocab
- Learn to write → learn how to express meaning in a second or heritage language

Work by Heidi Byrnes, Cecilia Colombi, James Paul Gee, Richard Kern, Hiram Maxime, Kate Paesani, Mary J. Shleppegrell, Janet Swaffar, and others.

- Evidence of development

Colombi, 2002; Norris and Pfeifer 2003; Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010; Gatti & Graves, 2020-2023 IPAP Project

# Learn to Write



- Teaching explicitly and modelling how writers do what they do (genre based, multiliteracies)
  - Role of context
  - Role of genre
  - Use of features
  - Role of modality
  - Role of intended audience



# Learn to Write



Write for an audience while in development

The screenshot shows the homepage of the We Authors website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the text "We Authors" on the left and "WELCOME SPANISH LANGUAGES COMING SOON SUBMIT" on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large, colorful abstract painting. Underneath the painting, there is a section titled "VIEW WRITING BY CAMPUS" with buttons for "John Jay", "NYCCT", and "QCC". At the bottom, there is a welcome message: "Welcome to We Authors, a space for work by heritage language students across the City University of New York."

The screenshot shows three article cards from the We Authors website. Each card has a title, a byline, and a publish date. The first card is titled "El Misterio de Marilyn Monroe" by "Anonymous Writer" and published on May 24, 2022. The second card is titled "Las nuevas leyes de reciclaje y lo que nadie te..." by "Ulises Mora" and published on May 23, 2022. The third card is titled "¿Buscas el éxito? La universidad es la respuesta" by "Ulises Mora" and published on May 23, 2022. Each card also has an "EDIT" button and a "NYCCT" button.

*We Authors*

# We Authors...



- is a website for multilingual students in heritage courses across CUNY
- is open to teachers of all heritage languages @ CUNY
  - **Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish**
- was piloted in 2021-22 in three **Spanish for HLLs** courses at three CUNY colleges
- provides students with **public-facing component** to assignments
  - **Facilitates learner engagement, advances writing proficiency**

# Website Tour

[weauthors.commons.gc.cuny.edu](http://weauthors.commons.gc.cuny.edu)

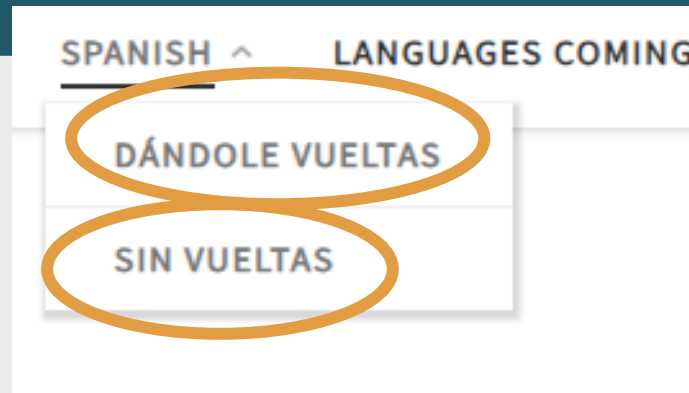


How the website is used in teaching

# Integration into an Existing Course



- Two types of writing
  - Last step of a process involving several drafts; the “best” a learner can achieve at that point (“Final Round”)
  - Share low-stakes, self-directed writing resulting from a class activity (“On my mind”)
- Use site once or multiple times
- Fully integrated, or as extra-credit activity, by invitation, or other?



# Model 1 from Pilot



- One four-year, one two-year college
  - First-semester course for Spanish HLLs
  - Second- and third-semester course for Spanish HLLs
- Proficiency levels (ACTFL):
  - From IM to AM
- All students share writing at their own level
- Fully integrated into the curriculum

# Model 1 from Pilot



- The classroom as a writing place
- Text-based curriculum developed by A. Gatti for the Investigating Pedagogies for Advanced Proficiency project (IPAP)
- Writing as a process: ongoing drafts and revisions
- Two main functionalities of *We Authors*
  - Last stage of the writing process
  - Modeling: analyzing students' posts from other semesters, colleges or classes

“Creating Extended Scaffolded Writing Tasks for Heritage Language Learners”

Saturday 11/18  
10:15 - 11:00 AM

McCormick Place -  
West Building

Room W179a

# Model 2 from Pilot



- Four-year college
- First-, second-, and third-semester course for Spanish HLLs
- Optional use of *We Authors* (not integrated into the curriculum)
  - by invitation
  - as extra credit activity

# Learner Feedback

# Recurrent Themes in the Feedback



- Audience awareness
- Vulnerability; lack of confidence in writing
- Community with classmates
- Gaining confidence (before/after)
- Pride

(all **boldface** added)



## Student 1 | Audience awareness, community

“I was pretty indifferent regarding publishing my work on a public site. I did not mind having to do so but I also did not fully understand the meaning behind it.

“However, it did **encourage me to try that much harder** when creating the second chronicle since I now had the knowledge that it would be getting published, and a **better idea of what kind of website it would be getting published on**. After reviewing the website, I also gained a better idea of how my writing should look in comparison to other students who also uploaded their work.”



## Student 2 | Vulnerability



**“I felt nervous and vulnerable** publishing my work on a public site. This is because I never write for myself or share my work with other people. Anytime I write its fact-based or based on a research related topic. The writings we did were different than the research-based papers I've written in the past, they were personal events. The work I published was personal and that's what made me feel vulnerable.”

## Student 3 | Joy



“I feel very good about publishing my work on a public site. I feel a **sense of joy** publishing my work because of all the work that was put into it.”

## Student 4 | Joy, community

“I thought it was kind of cool publishing my text on a public site it **gets your voice or the story you told out there** along with your classmates.”

## Student 5 | Gaining confidence/pride



“I believe it was a bit **intimidating** because im not used to publishing work online for others to read. Im a little **insecure of my writing** I feel like it lacks something but I can never find the thing it lacks. Really im not much of a writer and in spanish its harder to write but I tried and thats the good part.

“Today I published my other piece the last step of the chronicle and **honestly I was not intimidated instead I was proud of my work.** I felt like finally I wrote a good piece for class and I was totally fine with publishing that final piece. Adding a picture also was good because now my writing piece has an image of what im writing about.”

# We Authors L2



- Pilot with Japanese learners

## We Authors | Second-Language Writing

*Multilingual Student Voices in Second-Language Writing*

WELCOME JAPANESE ▾ LANGUAGES COMING SOON ▾ STUDENTS SUBMIT FACULTY ▾ Q



Welcome to We Authors | Second-Language Writing, a space for work by language students across the City University of New York.

Visit our sister site, *We Authors | Heritage Writing*, at [weauthors.commons.gc.cuny.edu](http://weauthors.commons.gc.cuny.edu).

### RECENTLY POSTED WRITING

わたしのすきなひとたち  
母 (はは) のオムライス料理 (りょうり)。  
Rat Cafe ネズミのきっさてん  
カピバラ  
Grand Prize

“We Authors Second Language Writing – Student Todoku Project”

Saturday 11/18  
5:30 - 6:15 PM  
Session

McCormick Place  
West Building  
Room W178b

**Thank you all for joining us today!**

Special thanks to

The CUNY Academic Commons Team

Tomonori Nagano for helping us with

instructions for instructors;

professors Borrachero and Sánchez Jimenez

for participating in the pilot; and

the heritage Spanish students at QCC, City

Tech, and John Jay



# Your Questions/Comments

Contact us at [ILETC@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:ILETC@gc.cuny.edu)

# Citations

- Byrnes, H. (2013). Positioning writing as meaning-making in writing research: An introduction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22(2), 95-106.
- Byrnes, H., Maxim, H., & Norris, J. (2010). Realizing Advanced Foreign Language Writing Development in Collegiate Education: Curricular Design, Pedagogy, Assessment. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, i-235.
- Colombi, C. (2002). Academic language development in Latino students' writing in Spanish. In M. Schleppergrell, & M. C. Colombi (Eds.). *Developing advanced literacy in first and second languages: Meaning with power* (pp. 67–86). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gatti, A. and Graves, S. (In preparation). Investigating Pedagogies for Advanced Proficiency.
- Kern, R. (2000). *Literacy and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Maxim, H. H. (2006). Integrating textual thinking into the introductory college-level foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90, 19–32
- Norris, J., & Pfeiffer, P. (2003). Exploring the Uses and Usefulness of ACTFL Oral Proficiency Ratings and Standards in College Foreign Language Departments. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36(4), 572-581.
- Paesani, K., Allen, H. W., & Dupuy, B. (2016). *A multiliteracies framework for Collegiate Foreign Language teaching*. Pearson.
- Swaffar, J. K., & Arens, K. M. (2005). *Remapping the foreign language curriculum: An approach through multiple literacies*. New York: Modern Language Association of America.