

Crafting L2 Multimodal Composing Identities: A Study with Secondary EFL Learners

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Abstract

Identity currently features as a prominent theme in digital multimodal composition (DMC), given the significant impact of DMC on identity expression. However, L2 learners' writer identity development and fluctuation in this type of textual composition needs further exploration in light of the absence of clearly established DMC-specific identity categories and a detailed account of writer identity expansion and restriction processes therein. This study attempts to fill this void by scrutinizing how three 11th graders learning English as a foreign language in Spain crafted their writer identities in English in a 16-week genre-based digital storytelling (DST) intervention that followed the genre-based systemic functional linguistics tradition of L2 writing, and included instruction on attitude (Martin & White, 2005). Qualitative data analysis of multi-source data followed Ivanič's (1998) writer identity framework, attitude categories, and key notions in multimodality, as well as the DST and identity literature. Results indicate students' awareness raising of such categories throughout digital story writing, and general preference for appreciation and judgment in writer identity construction, which was contingent upon certain factors. Students' writer identities and their fluctuation revealed types of specific DMC identity categories, and expansion and restriction processes, which illustrated their multimodal composing identity formation and transformation in digital story creation.

KEYWORDS: WRITER IDENTITY; DIGITAL MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION;
DIGITAL STORYTELLING; GENRE-BASED INSTRUCTION; SYSTEMIC
FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS; ATTITUDE.

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1. Introduction

In the new digital age, L2 educators have been urged to develop learners' competencies in navigating new technology-mediated writing tools and accommodating emerging genres (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Li & Storch, 2017), while also promoting engagement (e.g., García-Pastor, 2021). Genre pedagogies can be highly suitable in this regard (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Shin, 2018), enabling learners to craft multiple authorial identities (Hernández-Zamora & Zotzmann, 2014; Widodo, 2016), and to link new and traditional genres (. However, these pedagogies have not been sufficiently integrated into L2 digital multimodal composition (DMC). Additionally, exploring how learners and build their writer identities across digital genres and contexts can shed light on their digital literacies and inform pedagogy (Lam, 2000; Li & Storch, 2017; Nelson, 2008). However, research into writer identity development and fluctuation in DMC still “. Scrutinizing such processes through writer-specific and linguistically grounded frameworks, combined with multimodal approaches, may help to address these limitations, while elucidating the conditions that facilitate or hinder identity work in DMC (e.g., Cimasko & Shin, 2017; Shin, 2018).

Drawing on Ivanič's (1998) writer identity model, Martin and White's (2005) attitude system, multimodality notions, and digital storytelling (DST) and identity research, this study explores how three 11th graders learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Spain built their multimodal composing identities throughout the production of a personal digital story during a 16-week systemic functional linguistics (SFL) genre-based intervention on DST. We also considered factors affecting the construction of such identities in the composition process. A learner's multimodal composing identity refers to their identity as writers or designers in multimodal text creation, which consists of the impression that they convey of themselves as such through textual features, namely “discoursal self” (Ivanič, 1998), and their views about their intended messages, namely “authorial self,” which is also part of their discoursal selves (Ivanič, 1998). The current study thus addresses the underexplored process of writer identity formation and transformation in DMC, and the need for L2 DMC pedagogy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Appraisal: A Focus on Attitude and L2 Digital Communication

Appraisal is a framework It is divided into three subsystems: *attitude*, *engagement*, and *graduation* (Martin & White, 2005). Attitude comprises *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation*, with positive and negative values (Martin, 2000). *Affect*

deals with emotion expression and distinguishes un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction, and dis/inclination; for example, “*Judgment* is based on moral assessments of behavior, and includes social esteem (normality, capacity, and tenacity) and social sanction (veracity and propriety); for example, “Michael is highly intelligent” (social esteem, capacity) (Martin, 2000, p. 145) or “I’m actually an appalling teacher” (social sanction, propriety) (Martin, 2000, p. 157). *Appreciation* is concerned with aesthetic assessments, and involves impact and quality (reaction), balance and complexity (composition), and valuation (social value); for example, “Engagement, that is, the speaker/writer’s position regarding their own and alternative positions in a text, and graduation (i.e., the intensity of their evaluations) were not employed in this study, since the focus was students’ interpersonal meaning-making for writer identity construction, and how such identity work might change over time (see Belz, 2003).

Appraisal has been applied to L2 learners’ telecollaboration exchanges. Vinagre and Corral (2018) reported the predominance of affect in L2 English and Spanish learners who attempted to present a positive self-image and avoid confrontation. Similarly, Vinagre and Oskoz (2020) found a greater amount of affect markers than judgment and appreciation in L2 English and Spanish learners who discussed more personal topics, showed greater presence online, and spent more time on tasks. However, students with opposite tendencies presented more judgment and appreciation than affect. Oskoz and Gimeno-Sanz’ (2019, 2020) learners favored appreciation and judgment over affect, with Spanish learners using more judgment, and US participants more affect and appreciation. Likewise, Belz’ (2003) German learners of English judged their own culture positively, but were critical of their US partners’ behavior, who used more positive judgment and affect. By contrast, Oskoz and Pérez-Broncano’s (2016) learners deployed negative judgment and appreciation regarding their own culture. These attitude patterns were mainly related to the topic under discussion, their own and the foreign culture, task perception, and culture-specific conversational styles and backgrounds. Whereas attitude has been analyzed in telecollaborative encounters, less research has been conducted on how L2 learners present their attitude when developing their digital stories.

2.2 Genre Pedagogies of DST in L2: The SFL Tradition

pedagogies of digital stories and other multimedia genres are still making their way into the L2 DMC curriculum (Elola & Oskoz, 2017). These pedagogies draw on the notion of genre, which entails a view of writing as a socially situated process that adopts relatively stable, yet flexible, textual forms, whereby writers communicate with an audience for a particular purpose in a given rhetorical situation within a specific community and socio-historical context

(Johns, 2002). These approaches are based on the idea that helping learners to examine the features of socially situated writing can facilitate its processing and the production of communicatively effective texts (Hyland, 2004). A relevant genre approach is the SFL L2 writing tradition. Digital storytelling instruction following this tradition has been effective in raising L2 learners' awareness of the language features and structure of digital stories (Shin, 2018; Widodo, 2016), the function of images for the generation of ideas (Widodo, 2016), and intermodal meaning relations for specific communicative purposes, along with the metalanguages of semiotic modes (Shin, 2018).

These benefits of SFL-oriented DST instruction are not surprising, since SFL genre pedagogies organize digital story composition into cyclical steps that conform to the "teaching-learning cycle" (TLC) and scaffold learners throughout the process: (1) building knowledge of the genre through analysis of socio-communicative functions and intended audiences of digital story examples (e.g., Shin, 2018); (2) joint text deconstruction regarding genre stages, semiotic resources, and their interrelation for meaning-making (Shin, 2018; Widodo, 2016); and (3) joint and individual text construction through scriptwriting, storyboarding, and digital editions, as in other DST interventions (Castañeda, 2013; Oskoz & Elola, 2016a). In the current study, steps 1 and 2 were implemented at the same time as scriptwriting, whereby students analyzed and produced several writings of the autobiographical genre, which they transitioned to digital stories, similarly to certain DMC research dealing with other disciplinary genres (e.g., Cimasko & Shin, 2017; Oskoz & Elola, 2016b; Pacheco-Costa & Guzmán-Simón, 2020). In step 2, students received instruction on attitude (Martin & White, 2005), before focusing on multimodality and digital production (step 3) (Figure 1).

This emphasis on scriptwriting may inhibit learners' use of multimodality to avoid L2 writing (Kim & Lee, 2018), while promoting macro-cognitive operations and self-regulating strategies (Hung, 2019). However, it might also promote the view of the language mode as more central to meaning-making than other modes (see Nelson, 2008), leading to a distorted image of the genre's multimodal essence, and reinforcing beliefs about the superiority of the printed word over multimodality in academic writing (see García-Pastor, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Wang, 2022).

2.3 Writer Identities and L2 DMC in the Classroom: A Focus on DST

Digital multimodal composition and identity research have long illustrated how L2 learners develop their writer identities online (e.g., Lam, 2000; Yi, 2007). Similarly, interventionist studies dealing with DST have shown how

learners craft and/or expand their L2 writer selves. Hernández-Zamora and Zotzmann's (2014) underachieving EFL writers developed a general author identity before that of an academic writer in the production of personal digital stories. The authors assessed such development through these learners' design and redesign of available genres. Widodo's (2016) EFL schoolers built distinct multimodal composing identities in narrative digital stories (e.g., photographers), as they became aware of the interdependence of the visual and written modes. Lastly, Nelson's (2008) EFL learners strengthened their authorial voices in DST, at the same time that multimodal meaning-making occasionally hindered these. These researchers evaluated writer identity formation through learners' increased semiotic awareness, which we also used in this study for the same purpose, with a focus on attitudinal expression. We also examined identity fluctuation in terms of identity expansion, for example through the construction of other writer identities (Widodo, 2016), and identity restriction, for example through the writer's difficulty in conveying their authorial voice (Nelson, 2008), according to a number of individual and contextual factors.

These factors, which constrain and/or impede writer identity work in DMC as well as facilitate it, involve individual aspects, such as personality, self-perception, English competence, digital experience, and ideology, as well as contextual aspects, such as the rhetorical situation (digital genre, medium, target audiences, and communicative goals), the teacher (digital skills and ideology), teacher and peer effects, and the sociocultural context. Cimasko and Shin's (2017) English as a second language student's previous experience with the medium and the rhetorical situation limited her writer identity to an inauthentic linguistic identity in her remediation of an argumentative essay into a video. Individual features led two of Jiang's (2018) three EFL learners to the development of a competent writer identity in DMC, and to progression from an exam-oriented writer and a textbook-decoder learner identity to that of multimodal designer. However, the high-stakes testing ideology permeating Chinese education impeded the development of a writer identity in the third learner. Teachers' ideologies restricted Jiang and Ren's (2021) learners' writer identities to the language mode and prevented their development as creative composers across digital genres. Similarly, Wang's (2022) learners' strong orientation toward traditional writing limited their storyteller and creative writer identities to a linguistic design.

While these studies provide relevant information on writer identity construction in DMC and DST according to different factors, the process of multimodal composing identity formation and transformation is often meshed with general learner identity processes, which makes writer identity categories difficult to discern. Writer identity fluctuation in DMC is also depicted in terms of identity expansion and restriction, without sufficiently categorizing both

processes. Additionally, the factors that explain writer identity restriction may also contribute to their expansion. Therefore, this study seeks to respond to the following research questions.

- **RQ1:** How do 11th graders learning EFL in Spain craft their multimodal composing identities throughout the composition process of a personal digital story?
- **RQ2:** How do these identities fluctuate throughout such a process?

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

In order to respond to these two questions, a 16-week SFL genre-based DST intervention was implemented in a group of seventeen 11th grade high-school EFL learners in Spain. Our participants, for whom we have used pseudonyms, are three focal learners—two male (Daniel and Marcos) and one female (Alicia)—aged 16 years old, with B1 and B2 levels of English, as measured by standardized tests (Table 1). These learners were selected because they provided detailed explanations about their multimodal composing identities in terms of the semiotic resources they used, the design processes for their texts, and the factors that influenced their identity work.

The three learners are Spanish–Catalan bilinguals, and had been learning English for 10 years at the time of the study. Marcos and Alicia also attended after-school lessons, and Alicia used to have conversational exchanges with an

Table 1:
Focal Participants

Name	Sex	Age	Proficiency	Languages	L2 literacy practices	L1 literacy practices
Alicia	F	16	B1+	Spanish, Catalan	Reading texts, watching YouTube and TikTok videos	Writing WhatsApp messages, using Instagram
Daniel	M	16	B1	Spanish, Catalan	Watching online videos	Writing WhatsApp messages
Marcos	M	16	B2	Spanish, Catalan	Reading texts, watching TV series, YouTube and TikTok videos	Writing WhatsApp messages, using Instagram, Telegram, Twitter and Discord

L1 English speaker. Both Spanish LT learners had also used the L2 in immersion contexts, and read texts and watch TV series and TikTok videos in English. The three learners regularly consume YouTube videos and use WhatsApp in their L1 to communicate with family and friends, and Alicia and Marcos also employ Instagram. Marcos uses Telegram, Twitter (now X), and Discord to stay updated on current events and share content with friends, acquaintances, and other audiences. All participants provided informed consent for the research.

The teacher is one of the researchers, with experience in Spanish secondary education. To avoid researcher bias in the interpretation of the data and findings, he was encouraged to reflect on and critically approach his power position relative to the students as interpreter of their views, and his thoughts were discussed in data analysis meetings.

3.2 Data and Data Collection Procedures

The interviews were based on open questions about students' perception of the DST task (questions 1 and 2); questions about the content, socio-communicative purpose, and target audience of their stories (question 3); their L2 writer identities (question 4) and their identities regarding scriptwriting and multimodal composition (questions 5 and 6); the semiotic resources students employed to craft these identities with a focus on images (question 7); and their L2 writing abilities and digital skills as digital story producers (question 8) (Appendix A).

3.3 The SFL Genre-Based Intervention

Following the TLC, learners first wrote an unguided text about themselves, and analyzed the socio-communicative purpose and target audience of an autobiographical mentor or model text. They also reflected on their writer identities (sessions 1 and 2), analyzed genre stages and main linguistic elements, and produced three drafts, after receiving teacher and peer feedback (sessions 3, 4, and 5). Students also examined cohesion and coherence in the model text and their third drafts, and received instruction on attitude categories (Martin & White, 2005), modifying their writings accordingly (sessions 6 and 7). They then received teacher feedback, were introduced to DST, and transformed their writings into their scripts, while reflecting on the categories and their writer identities (session 8). In sessions 9 and 10, they represented attitudinal meanings visually, following instruction on images. Session 11 dealt with voice, music, and sound, and session 12 with storyboarding, receiving teacher feedback. Students then learned to use the DST software InShot, and produced their multimodal ensembles (sessions 13 and 14), which they shared with peers, teachers, family, the school principal, the town's mayor,

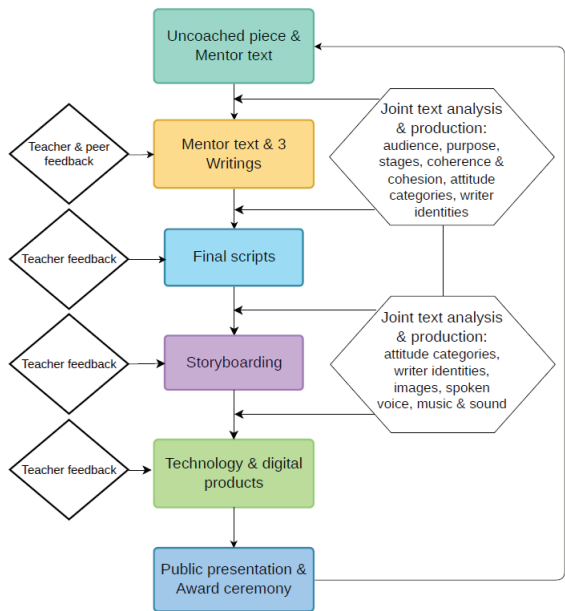


Figure 1: Instructional intervention.

and the culture councillor at an out-of-school award-winning event (Figure 1) (Appendix B).

3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis of students’ writings and digital stories was conducted using Atlas.ti 9.0 software, and followed Martin and White’s (2005) attitude categories, which allowed for the examination of students’Ivanič, 1998). modes for interpersonal meaning-making and writer identity construction. We analyzed images, drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) framework, and Lambert’s (2010) literal and metaphorical images. However, we mainly embraced multimodality and DST and identity research notions. We also considered factors affecting writer identities as they emerged in the interviews, classroom interactions, activities, and the teacher’s observations.

Interview data were analyzed following content analysis (Krippendorff & Bock, 2009), Ivanič’s (1998) constructs, and DMC and DST identity research (e.g., Cimasko & Shin, 2017; Shin, 2018; Wang, 2022; Widodo, 2016). In order to examine students’ writer identity fluctuations, we first identified writer identities in their writings, digital stories, and interviews, employing those established in the literature (e.g., “creative writer,” “researcher,” etc.). Through

recursive coding, we refined such identities, providing a definition for each and examples from the data. We also examined these identities vis-à-vis students' drafts, scripts, digital stories, and interviews, while considering their L1 digital literacies and the factors they reported as affecting their identity work. We then analyzed the fluctuation of these categories in terms of identity expansion and restriction processes, which enabled us to outline a typology of these processes (Figure 7) and appraise students' multimodal composing identity formation and transformation. Consulting them about their writer identities in class contributed positively to their validity (Zhang et al., 2021).

4. Results

4.1 Multimodal Composing Identities in Digital Story Writing

Regarding RQ1 (How do 11th graders learning EFL in Spain craft their multimodal composing identities throughout the composition process of a personal digital story?), discursal and authorial selves

The greater frequency of appreciation in learners' writings responds to their perception of the author's evaluations of the events narrated and their communication as the main purpose of the personal digital story genre. This was revealed by participants' discussion of the main message of their stories in the interviews. For example, Daniel indicated that he wanted to explain how his relationship with the teacher "affects how you like or dislike a subject" [*afecta a tu gusto por una asignatura*], while Marcos mainly attempted to convey the idea that "a large part of learning depends on yourself" [*una gran parte del aprendizaje depende de ti mismo*]. Learners' perceptions were contingent upon their understanding of the DST task, as mentioned in the interviews. For

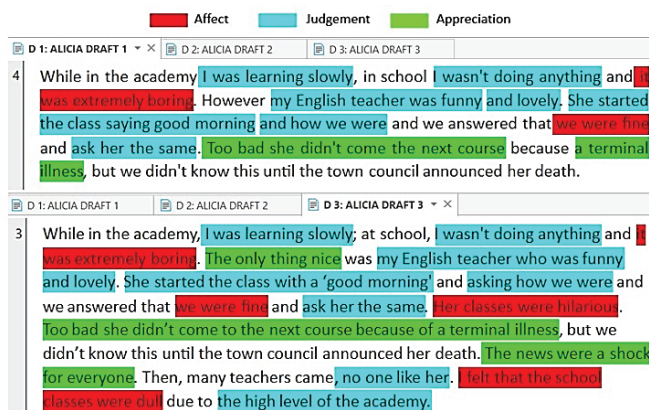


Figure 2: Affect, judgment, and appreciation in Alicia's first and third drafts.

example, Alicia thought that the task was to write an autobiographical text, like the text she wrote for another class: “In fourth grade of compulsory secondary education, a teacher told us to write an autobiography, and I thought that you wanted the same” [*En cuarto de ESO, una profesora nos pidió que hiciéramos una autobiografía, y pensé que querías lo mismo*].

The increasing presence of judgment was related to participants’ awareness of the genre’s appropriateness for condemning and praising their English teachers’ behavior through judgments of social sanction, and evaluating themselves as social beings and English learners using judgments of social esteem (Martin & White, 2005). The students offered this information in the interviews regarding their English language learning experience and the self-image that they intended to convey. For example, Daniel described his negative experience with English in high school by judging his English teacher’s behavior as “fairly strict” [*una profe bastante estricta*], while Marcos attempted to present himself as an autonomous L2 learner, who succeeded notwithstanding his bad teacher: “You can ... learn on your own ... if I could, they (others) can too” [*Puedes ... aprender por tu cuenta ... si yo lo he conseguido, ellos también pueden*].

The growing presence of affect was mainly observed in Alicia’s writings (Figure 3), who became aware of the genre’s affordances to craft an identity of a sensitive writer that enabled her to present her true self to the audience, as reported in her interview: “I wanted them (audience) to know me for who I



Figure 3: Affect in Alicia’s third draft and final script.



Figure 4: Extract from Alicia's digital story.

am, and that my identity as writer and my 'self' were connected ... and convey affect" [*Quería que me conocieran por mi misma, que yo como escritora y yo como yo misma estuviera vinculado ... y transmitir emoción*].

Attitude categories emerged in students' digital stories in the form of certain narrative images (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), combined with specific mode color elements, as well as music tempos, rhythms, and tones (see van Leeuwen, 2016). These enabled students to build distinct multimodal composing identities in their digital texts, such as sensitive writer, screenplay writer, and film-maker in Alicia's case (Figure 4).

Students' distinct multimodal composing identities, as observed in their expression of attitudinal meanings, were contingent upon a number of factors, namely: (1) target audiences, for example YouTuber followers in the case of Marcos, who saw himself "as a YouTuber that was making a video for his audience" [*como un YouTuber que hacía un video para su audiencia*], as shared in his interview; (2) rhetorical goals, for example Alicia indicated in her interview that she selected images in her digital story to emotionally move the audience ("My objective with the images ... was that viewers could feel my emotions" [*las imágenes tenían como objetivo ... que el público sintiera esos sentimientos*]); and (3) participants' personalities and preferences, for example Daniel's humorous personality led him to craft his identity as a funny person, as he affirmed in his digital story ("I'm a kind of joker") and interview ("I wanted to show myself as frank and funny" [*quería mostrarme transparente y cómico*]), whereas Marcos' preference for scientific genres accounts for the objective voice that he aimed to construct, as stated in his interview ("I tried to sound as most objective as possible" [*intenté mostrarme lo más objetivo posible*]).

Participants' preferences regarding identity construction and expression of attitude were also related to their use of digital tools and social media, which they disclosed to the teacher in class, as noted in his observations. Marcos revealed that his expression of online identity in L1 typically involves appearing funny, yet objective (observations 9 and 10). The detached L2 writer identity that he intended to build across his writings thus echoes a similar L1

online identity. Alicia mentioned that she expressed herself in her digital story similarly to the way she usually communicates online, except for her use of language and personal images in DST (observation 9). Daniel indicated that his conversational style on WhatsApp, and humoristic self-image on Instagram, resembled his self-expression and the comic multimodal composing identity that he aimed to construct in digital story writing (observation 11). Although none of them mentioned their digital stories on their own social media, Daniel and Alicia employed Instagram as a source of inspiration and memes, respectively, for multimodal text creation (observations 11 and 12).

4.2 Identity Processes in Digital Story Composition

In response to RQ2 (How do these identities fluctuate throughout such a process?), the patterns described above regarding students’ use of affect, judgment, and appreciation in their writings and digital stories enabled them to build distinct multimodal composing identities that revealed their multimodal composing identity trajectories in digital story writing. Thus, Daniel constructed a casual writer identity in his drafts and script through the use of colloquial expressions (e.g., “bla, bla, bla”), repetitions, and hyperbolic metaphors to amuse his audience. He then shifts to a more encompassing identity of comedian in his digital story, mainly through the transformation of stock images into memes, and their combination with verbal and music elements (Figure 5). Such identity fluctuation illustrates the expansion of his writer self through a process of identity generalization, since his initial casual writer identity gives way to a more general identity category in his digital text, in line with his personality, preferences, and L1 digital literacy, as already mentioned.

In this example, Daniel crafts an identity of comedian by rendering his dramatic story humorously through the intermodal combination of a humorous meme, whereby he jokes around his loneliness, weirdness, and foreign accent

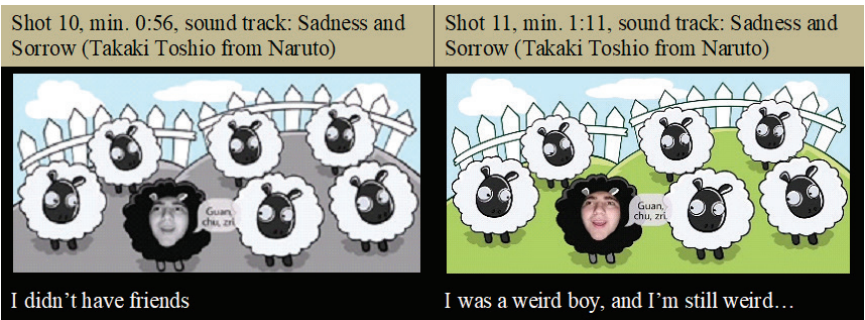


Figure 5: Extract from Daniel’s digital story.

in English (“, with negative social esteem in the language mode and music mode in a complementary relationship of divergence (Unsworth, 2006).

Alicia crafted a critical writer identity through appreciation and judgment in her writings, along with a sensitive writer identity by means of affect, which she foregrounds in her script and digital story. Her self-presentation as an invested learner through popular culture references (e.g., *ReBoot: The Guardian Code* and other TV and book series) enables her to connect her school and out-of-school L2 literacy (see Pacheco-Costa & Guzmán-Simón, 2020) and legitimizes the screenplay writer and film-maker identities she builds through the different music and voice-related cues in her script, and the inclusion of intertexts from media genres in her digital story (Figure 4). Therefore, Alicia’s identity fluctuation in digital story composition unveils a multimodal composing identity trajectory that rests in an identity expansion process different from Daniel’s, in that it consists of the diversification versus the generalization of her writer self through the construction of multiple identities, similar to Widodo’s (2016) learners.

Marcos builds an objective academic and personal ironic writer identity across his drafts. His objective academic voice is observed through his use of formal language, impersonal statements, and an argumentative position that surfaces through judgment and appreciation meanings. His personal ironic identity is based on his use of rhetorical questions, colloquial expressions, code-switching, and intonation. These writer identities are attuned to his L1 digital literacy, and his self-presentation as autonomous learner and test-taker, who learns English for instrumental purposes, like students in other DMC studies (e.g., Jiang, 2018; Wang, 2022). However, his self as objective writer clashes with the sensitive voice characteristic of personal digital stories (Lambert, 2010), which Marcos does not identify with (“I see myself writing newspaper or scientific articles or essays, unlike writing poetry, narrative texts or plays” [*me veo escribiendo artículos periodísticos o científicos o ensayo; pero no textos de poesía, narrativa o teatro*]). Consequently, he abandons this identity in his final script and digital story, and enhances the ironic aspect of his writer self (Figure 6) by crafting an identity of YouTuber. Marcos’ identity shifts thus unveil a process of identity restriction regarding an aspect of such a self (objectivity) and a simultaneous process of identity expansion concerning another aspect (irony) through the construction of a specific multimodal composing identity in his digital text.

In this example, Marcos reinforces his ironic writer identity by the divergent meaning of his statements, and the question he formulates, superimposed on the image of a frog, which contributes to such identity work through the representation of himself in animal form. He also builds his YouTuber identity through this image and the video game music that he deploys.



Figure 6: Extract from Marcos' digital story.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the writer identity development and fluctuation process of three 11th graders learning EFL in Spain, who created personal digital stories following an SFL genre-based intervention that included instruction on attitude (Martin & White, 2005). Regarding our RQ1, participants appropriated, transformed, and transduced elements from a diversity of modes employing the affordances of digital stories to bridge their (i) Their increasing awareness of attitudinal resources for interpersonal meaning-making to build distinct discoursal and authorial selves in digital story writing is consistent with the positive effects of a multimodal authoring pedagogy that also involved instruction on such resources in language learners' expression of evaluative meanings in digital comics (Unsworth & Mills, 2020). These results suggest that a pedagogical genre-sensitive approach to DMC, which develops students' writing of disciplinary genres (Hyland, 2004; Li & Storch, 2017), shows their connection with digital genres (i), and involves instruction on appraisal can raise L2 learners' awareness of different semiotic resources for conveying evaluative meanings and crafting writer identities.

Students' preference for judgment and appreciation over affect in their identity work resembles the attitude choices in Oskoz and Gimeno-Sanz' (2019, 2020) studies, and Oskoz and Pérez-Broncano's (2016) L2 English and Spanish learners, as well as Belz' (2003) L2 English German students in telecollaboration. These findings indicate our participants' perception of the task as a formal academic activity, as in Oskoz & Gimeno-Sanz' (2019, 2020) studies, and the personal digital story genre as more appropriate for appreciating phenomena and appearing judgmental than expressing one's feelings. Through their judgments, they attempted to be honest with the audience, similarly to Belz'

(2003) German students, who were strongly committed to the truth value of their propositions when criticizing their interactional partners. Therefore, our results differ from the predominant expression of emotion in L2 learners' digital stories (e.g., Hernández-Zamora & Zotzmann, 2014; Kim & Lee, 2018; Yang, 2012), and some L2 English learners' and L1 English speakers' telecollaborative interactions (e.g., Belz, 2003; Vinagre & Corral, 2018), which underscores the high flexibility of digital genres (Elola & Oskoz, 2017).

When analyzed separately, students showed distinct attitudinal patterns, which were mostly observed in Alicia's prominent use of affect, and were contingent upon the multimodal composing identities that they intended to build according to their increased target audience awareness (see Kim & Lee, 2018), rhetorical goals, personalities, and preferences for self-expression, not only in the L2, as illustrated in DMC and identity research (Cimasko & Shin, 2017; Jiang, 2018; Jiang & Ren, 2021; Wang, 2022), but also in their L1, as shown by studies of learners' biliterate practices online (e.g., Yi, 2007). Other factors affecting the expression of attitudinal meanings, for example their cultural conversational styles (Belz, 2003) and backgrounds (Vinagre & Corral, 2018), were irrelevant in this study. These findings thus reinforce the idea that, regardless of their conventional forms, genres are shaped by the unique rhetorical situation in which they emerge, and such a situation foregrounds certain factors that affect learners' meaning-making and identity work. They also highlight the adequacy of an L2 DMC pedagogy that considers students' L1 digital literacy.

Regarding our RQ2, the writer identity categories observed in the data reveal participants' perception of their writing skills and abilities (competent writer); their approach to the content of their texts (objective, critical, sensitive, casual, and ironic writer); the genres they commonly produce (academic writer, screenplay writer, film-maker); their use of specific digital platforms for multimodal composing (YouTuber); and the general purpose of their textual production process, along with the performative aspect of their writer selves (comedian) (see Ivanič, 1998). These categories depict writer-specific identity types that illustrated participants' writer identity formation in DMC, regardless of other learner identities (e.g., test taker) (Jiang, 2018) that might also emerge therein, but are not distinctive of a writer's self. When examined across drafts, final scripts, and digital stories, these categories revealed students' writer identity fluctuations, which involved specific identity expansion and restriction processes that the L2 DMC and identity literature have not categorized thus far (Figure 7).

In this study, expansion based on the generalization of a writer's identities under a single more encompassing category was observed in Daniel and Marcos. Expansion according to the diversification of such identities through

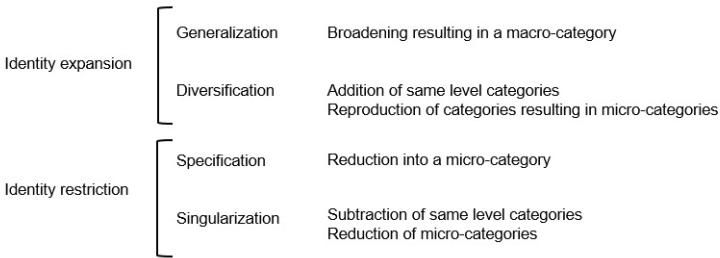


Figure 7: Writer identity expansion and restriction processes.

the emergence of multiple others that are added to, and/or derived from, was found in Alicia. Restriction based on the specification of a writer’s identities into a single more concrete category was not illustrated by our participants, but might emerge in other L2 writer identity data. Finally, restriction based on their singularization, namely, their reduction in number, was observed in Marcos. These processes may occur simultaneously in DMC, as observed in Marcos, whose identity restriction was accompanied by an expansion process in his digital text, and was caused by the features of the genre at hand, signaling its potential for curtailing authorial voice in the L2 (e.g., Nelson, 2008).

6. Conclusion

Authorship in L2 digital multimodal text design is a complex endeavor that warrants examination. However, empirical findings regarding writer identity formation and transformation in DMC are still limited across student samples, digital genres, and contexts in L2 education. This study exploresuggest that students developed their writer identities through the communication of attitudinal meanings according to factors that were relevant for their meaning-making and identity work in the particular rhetorical situation in which they produced their digital stories. Additionally, they built writer identities that respond to specific category types, and whose fluctuation in writing revealed different kinds of identity expansion and restriction processes.

The findings of this study also have a number of pedagogical implications, since they highlight the potential of genre-based approaches to DMC that follow the SFL tradition of L2 writing to raise learners’ awareness of meaning-making across semiotic modes, which fulfils target audience expectations and facilitates their writer identity work. The notion of genre, and the guided text analysis and production activities that genre-based writing methodologies involve, are useful to enhance learners’ understanding of the semiotic features of digital texts regarding a specific socio-communicative purpose within a

given rhetorical situation, so that they can achieve their communicative goals more efficiently, as well as their desired multimodal composing identities. Taking disciplinary genres as a starting point, and working on the similarities and differences between these and the new digital genres in the language writing and/or speech modes, seems to be an adequate pedagogical strategy to raise students' awareness of the affordances and constraints of both genre types for the communication of intended messages (see Darwin, 2023), as well as identity formation and transformation. Our findings also suggest that teachers should promote a view of language as social semiotic action, so that learners conceive written and spoken words as signs, which, together with non-linguistic signs, enable them to make purposeful form-meaning-function mappings that serve to convey ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings within and across semiotic modes, as well as construct and communicate identities. Finally, the results underscore the need to consider learners' L1 digital literacy in L2 DMC. This might help them better develop their selves as multimodal composers, while reducing the potential dissonance that might emerge between their L1 and L2 writer selves.

The study is not without limitations, since it is only based on three focal learners. We did not consider specific types of emotions within affect, nor did we address the positive and negative values of students' attitudinal meanings, which would have strengthened our findings, enabling more reliable comparisons with studies dealing with attitude in other L2 digital genres. Additionally, the collection and analysis of more forms of data over a longer period would have enhanced our understanding of students' writer identity processes, as well as providing a more in-depth analysis of secondary data and a more systematic analysis of intermodal relations in their digital texts. Future research on L2 DMC and identity might benefit from analytical frameworks and empirical findings regarding intersubjective positioning and stance in L2 academic writing. Researchers might also contemplate different genre-based pedagogies, for example the New Rhetoric school or the teaching of English for specific purposes (Hyland, 2004; Johns, 2002), and other instructional perspectives that are more attuned to their theoretical orientations and specific teaching contexts. Larger and more diverse samples that go beyond college L2 learners might also be considered in addition to digital genres and social media, which are in need of further exploration (e.g., TikTok videos, Instagram).

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

DST and identity project in Secondary education

1. ¿Cuál es tu visión de la tarea sobre relato digital? (What's your view of the DST task?).
2. ¿Cómo has percibido la tarea al tratarse de una tarea evaluable? ¿Ha influido esto en tu realización de la misma? Razona tu respuesta (How was your perception of the task as a mandatory assignment? Did this affect your task performance? Please explain).
3. ¿Cuál ha sido la historia de tu relato digital, y cuál fue tu intención al narrarla, es decir, qué querías transmitir y a quién? (What was the story of your digital story, and what was your intended message, that is, what did you want to convey and to whom?).
4. ¿Qué te supuso el hecho de tener que escribir en inglés y cómo te has visto como escritor en esta lengua? (How did you find yourself writing in English, and how did you see yourself as a writer in this language?).
5. ¿Cómo querías mostrarte a través de la escritura del guion de tu historia? (How did you want to present yourself through scriptwriting?).
6. ¿Cómo querías mostrarte a través de la composición multimodal de tu historia? (How did you want to present yourself through multimodal composition?)
7. ¿Qué recursos utilizaste para ello tanto en la parte escrita como en la parte multimodal, y en esta última, cómo influyó esto en las imágenes que seleccionaste y utilizaste? (Which semiotic resources did you use for this purpose in scriptwriting and multimodal composition, and in the latter, how did your self-presentation influence your selection and use of images?).
8. ¿Cómo te has sentido como productor del relato digital en relación con tus habilidades de escritura y digitales? (How have you felt as a video producer regarding your L2 writing abilities and digital skills?).

Appendix B: Intervention Sessions

Sessions	Content	Activities
1	About me	Uncoached writing & analysis of mentor text
2	Genre as purposeful social action	Analysis of mentor text & uncoached piece
3	Genre stages: Orientation (About me 1)	Analysis of mentor text & uncoached piece: 1 st draft
4	Genre stages: Record of events (About me 2)	Analysis of mentor text & 1 st draft: 2 nd draft
5	Genre stages: Conclusion (About me 3)	Analysis of mentor text & 2 nd draft: 3 rd draft
6	Language: Coherence & cohesion	Analysis of mentor text & 3 rd draft: Coherence and cohesion
7	Language: The meaning system of attitude	Analysis of mentor text & 3 rd draft: Attitude categories
8	Introduction to DST	Final script & analysis of attitude meanings and writer identities
9	DST: Images 1	Image selection for visual representation of attitude meanings and writer identities
10	DST: Images 2	Analysis of image selection after instruction on image types
11	DST: Voice	Analysis of voice, music, and sound + voiceover practice
12	DST: Storyboarding	Completion of storyboards & final feedback
13	DST medium	InShot usage + digital story edition
14	DST: Sharing our stories	Public presentation of digital stories + awards