Moving research agendas on writing processes and WCF processing in pen and paper and digital environments: Theoretical and methodological issues

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In this presentation, I will focus almost exclusively on the processing dimension of written corrective feedback (WCF) with one disclaimer: The presentation is situated within a curricular and ISLA applied process-oriented approach to WCF that acknowledges explicit learning (as opposed to implicit learning or acquisition) occurring in the instructed setting. First, I will situate WCF in the context in which it is provided and the variables associated with this context. This will be followed by a succinct report and critique of several theoretical underpinnings postulated to account for the role of WCF in ISLA. I will then present the current process-oriented approach to writing and WCF studies. While the current effort to expand methodological approaches (eye-tracking, pausing behavior, screen capture techniques, stimulated retrospective recalls, keystroke logging, think aloud protocols, written languaging) to capture writing and cognitive processes in pen-and-paper and digital writing is clearly laudable, it is important to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses. To do so, I will first address, based on empirical research, the usual critiques levelled against the more established think aloud (TA) procedure (and stimulated recalls). I will then critically review current methodological and technological techniques employed in both the writing and WCF strands of research to gather mostly behavioral data on the writing process. I will subtly argue that future studies may want to not only provide behavioral writing data but also probe deeper into their roles in potential language learning. This will be followed by examples of the richness of concurrent data obtained via TAs to establish several cognitive processes employed during both the writing and revision stages of the writing process. In addition, the concept of and different operationalizations of depth of process (DoP), in an attempt to capture the dynamism of WCF processing, will be presented and discussed. Finally, both theoretical and methodological agendas will be provided underscoring the need to have testable theoretical underpinnings and appropriate research methodologies, including triangulation of data elicitation procedures, that can adequately address how L2 writers process WCF when associated with writing as a site for learning.