

## Developing Writing in Spanish Heritage Language Learners: An Integrated Process Approach

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### *Abstract*

*There is no clear-cut division between orality and literacy (Street, 1993). This idea is central to literacy development in the Spanish heritage language (SHL) context because the opportunities to use heritage language (HL) skills are often oral, not written. Furthermore, the cultural situations that speakers find for their language are less extensive since they are in an environment where their HL is not the dominant language. This paper surveys the research on the writing of SHL learners (SHLLs) and proposes an integrated approach of product, process and post-process writing within a critical pedagogy that allows SHL writers to own the development of their HL literacy.*

**Keywords:** *heritage languages, Spanish, multiliteracies, writing*

### **Background**

Traditionally, we view speaking, listening, reading and writing as distinct abilities. We can even attest that each develops at different rates in every student. However, researchers in the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS) point out there is no clear-cut division between orality and literacy (Street, 1993). Literacy goes beyond the cognitive processes of acquiring reading and writing. It is not a stand-alone practice, but one culturally situated and affected by power. The application of the skills gained by the individual needs to be considered within the cultural institutions the speaker inhabits. Casting an ethnographic perspective on literacy allows a look at actual practices in their cultural settings and at how power relations influence its development. Such a view allows investigators to go beyond dominant discourses of literacy and to understand the socially and culturally meaningful ways in which subordinate groups apply their knowledge (Street, 1993). Gee (2015) connects NLS to what he labels Situated Cognition Studies by putting forth a dynamic version of schema theory in which individuals use their prior knowledge and experiences to act, or for the purposes outlined here, write. Researching specifically the language abilities of Spanish/English bilingual students, Martínez (2010) suggests identifying ways to connect the skills they bring to the classroom to help them develop academic literacy. He considers Lee's (2007) Cultural Modeling framework helpful to demonstrate to students what they already are able to do with the language and to help them extend it to new situations. A specific example of this application is Orellana's (2009) use of SHLLs skills in translating and interpreting as resources for academic writing. Cultural Modeling ties back in with

the original research put forth by NLS as it has its foundation in sociocultural learning theory, situating literacy in social and cultural practice (Freire, 2000; Gee, 1990).

The blurring of orality and literacy is central to any discussion of literacy development in the SHL context within the United States because the opportunities to use Spanish language skills are more often oral, not written. Furthermore, the culturally relevant situations that speakers find for their language are usually different from those in a predominantly Spanish-speaking country. For many SHL speakers, their use of the HL is limited to the home and the community (Colombi, 2015). Because it is speaking abilities within the community that play a central role in the lives of most SHL speakers, the culturally significant uses that these individuals find for their language skills bear strongly on their literacy development.

Fortunately for SHL instructors, an acknowledgement of the hurdles present in the maintenance of Spanish in the United States has been at the forefront of researchers' agendas as we continue to work on the development of successful and socially responsible pedagogies. At the moment, SHL education finds itself trying to reconcile two models. The second dialect acquisition approach intends to add the academic variety to the learner's linguistic repertoire. Its critics find its central concept of *appropriateness*—the idea that varieties have a place and an interlocutor—problematic as it completely takes the choice away from the speaker (Fairclough, 2013; Mrak, 2014). Critical language awareness (CLA), developed to counter this criticism, is an approach that seeks to inform the learner on questions of linguistic prestige and subordination, the validity of all language varieties and the fact that the choice of which variety to use belongs with the individual. While the former provides students the tools to learn the academic variety of Spanish, the latter gives them the sociolinguistic knowledge that will allow them to decide which variety is right for them (Lee-man, 2005). In an attempt to further the insight into Heritage Language Education (HLE), the question this paper addresses is what model of literacy development is best suited to the writing needs of SHLLs in a university-level SHL course.

### Spanish Heritage Language Learners' Writing

Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski (2014) categorized the types of studies that have been conducted on the writing of HLLs into three groups. In the first, speakers were asked their opinions about their writing in Spanish. Carreira and Kagan's (2011) research asked speakers to rate their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in their HL. They gave themselves the lowest marks on writing. In a survey of Latino professionals in California, Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez (2006) found that even though 76% of the surveyed used at least some Spanish at work, only 1.1% wrote in Spanish at work. Callahan (2010) interviewed high school and college age SHL speakers. They reported minimal use of written Spanish. Tse's (2001) subjects with high levels of HL literacy credited voluntary reading for the results. Overall, the participants in these investigations did not write in Spanish very often, and when they did, many felt they did not do it well.

The second group of studies comprised accounts of the writing produced by HL speakers. García (2002) described how her subjects—bilingual teachers—transferred the mechanics, structure and discourse style of English onto their Spanish papers. Spicer-Escalante (2004) looked at the writing of SHLLs, second language (L2) learners

and monolingual Spanish speakers, and found characteristics of both L2 and monolingual Spanish writers in the production of the SHLLs, concluding that these writers create their own rhetorical and linguistic space. Colombi's (1997) corpus analysis of students' oral and written academic language showed how students used the conversational resources they had developed in their HL to write in academic contexts. Her results signaled a need to guide students from informal to formal registers (see also 2000, 2002, 2006, 2009; Achugar & Colombi, 2008). Schleppegrell and Colombi (1997) compared English and Spanish essays of bilingual writers and found that they transferred the academic strategies they had developed in English while writing in the HL. Martínez (2007) examined two types of writing assignments—graded and non-graded—and found greater influence from English in the more formal work, as demonstrated by the realization of subject pronouns. Callahan (2010) discovered two strategies used by SHLLs, translating and using intuitive knowledge by uttering a phrase aloud to test it for morphosyntactic and/or lexical acceptability. While some of these analyses found influence from English in the writing of SHLLs, others indicated SHLLs have their own way of applying their oral experiences to their writing.

The third group of studies examined the development of students' writing. In a qualitative analysis of one subject, Nichols and Colón (2000) noted that it took their learner three years to increase her spelling accuracy and her fluency when producing journals. The use of think-aloud protocols allowed Schwartz (2003) to determine that students availed themselves of four different strategies: prewriting, composing, surface-level editing and deep-level editing. She noted that the papers that had received more deep-level editing were also the ones that received the better grades. She also found heavy reliance on translation. Jegerski and Ponti (2014) looked at the effectiveness of peer reviews on essays written by SHLLs and reported that even though there was no change in lexical density or syntactic complexity, and transfer from English was present, there was improvement in vocabulary acquisition. They concluded that peer reviews can be a useful tool for students when combined with instructor feedback. Because Colombi (2003, 2009) found that SHLLs apply their knowledge of spoken language to their writing, she proposed a curriculum that makes social and cultural conventions of both oral and written forms explicit to students (Colombi & Harrington, 2014). When taken as a whole, these investigations suggest that a process-writing approach that takes students from informal to formal writing would suit SHLLs best.

Additional work analyzing the writing of SHLLs suggested changes to approaches previously taken. Two of these discussed the need for writing prompts that take into account students' experiences as speakers of a minority language (Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2013; Martínez, 2005). Martínez (2005) exemplified this with the introduction of genre chains, writing assignments linked to a theme with meaning and importance to the SHL learner. He further suggested the definition of genre needs to be expanded beyond traditional academic writing to take into account the linguistic and social realities of the SHL community. His post-process approach to writing falls within the CLA and critical pedagogies that have been advocated for HLE (Carreira, 2000; Correa, 2011; Gutierrez, 1997; Leeman, 2005; Martínez, 2003; Mrak, 2014). CLA centers on the connection between the curriculum and the students' social reality to evince the power differences found in existent discourses (Achugar, 2015). Loureiro-Rodríguez (2013) believes that writing activities that are meaningful to the

students because they focus on their experiences and emotions work as a springboard to allow them to think about their language identity. As Ruiz (1997) has stated, “...voice and agency are central to critical pedagogy; without them there is no such thing as ‘empowerment’” (p. 327). Along this same line, Darvin and Norton (2017) describe critical pedagogies as multiple ways in which educators can help language learners within their own social practices and experiences, taking into account their identities and inequitable power relations in society. Critical educators help learners negotiate power relations in order to construct their identity as legitimate speakers of the language under study. These researchers go on to explain their view of *identity* as “multiple, fluid, and a site of struggle” (2017, p. 3). This is precisely what defines the SHL university student—an individual who is bi-cultural, who has to function between a Hispanic and an American identity and who is looking for ways to fit into both (Clayton, Medina, & Wiseman, 2019; Tse, 1998).

Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski (2014) suggested nine principles to assist HLLs in developing writing proficiency: (1) take into account the stage of proficiency; (2) use process writing tasks and prewriting activities; (3) require multiple drafts and guided peer reviews; (4) design clear grading rubrics; (5) respond to content, organization and sentence-level errors; (6) develop writing through reading; (7) teach composing and editing explicitly; (8) work on vocabulary development; and (9) incorporate multiple forms of literacy. Along these lines, Chevalier (2004) proposed a pedagogical model for a multi-stage writing process for HLLs—reproduced here in Table 1—where students work through a continuum that goes from least formal to most. The four stages of development cover six different writing modes within which are subsumed specific target topics, per Table 1 (Chevalier, 2004, p.7) below.

Table 1

*Pedagogical Model for the SHL Writing Class*

STAGES	STAGE I	STAGE II		STAGE III		STAGE IV
WRITING MODES	CONVERSATION	DESCRIPTION	NARRATIVE	EVALUATION	EXPLANATION	ARGUMENT
PROCESSES	composing written forms of conversational discourse	describe	sequencing in time and space; recount	expressing opinions	sequencing: causal relationships; explain	persuading readers to accept a point of view; interpretation
DISCOURSE TYPES	dialogue, interior monologue	descriptions: object, landscape, people	narratives: personal family histories, stories, fairy tales	evaluations: reviews, critiques	explanations: news articles, summaries, reports	essays, academic papers
TARGET TOPICS	orthography, punctuation	adjectives, intersentential cohesion	verbal morphology, intersentential cohesion	intersentential cohesion: linking words, set phrases	passive voice, intersentential cohesion	subordination, intersentential cohesion

This paper incorporates the nine principles suggested by Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski (2014) and the model recommended by Chevalier (2004) into a proposal for developing the writing of university-level SHLLs.

## **An Integrated Approach to Writing for the Spanish Heritage Language Learner**

In general terms, the instructional needs of SHLLs fall somewhere between those of L1 and L2 learners, depending on their proficiency levels and how much exposure to reading and writing they have had. While SHLLs have an implicit sense of how the language works, it is important to determine their level of grammar in the acquisition continuum which depends on exposure to Spanish language and Latino culture. For some, this would have happened upon entering elementary school; for others, their parents and siblings' use of English in the home will be determining factors (Carreira & Potowski, 2011). Because of this heterogeneity, instructors need to find out what students bring with them to the classroom in order to be able to assist them in expanding their linguistic repertoire and to understand what skills their students wish to develop in their HL. There is agreement among scholars that when it comes to SHLLs, it is crucial to create a differentiated classroom and a flexible curriculum that takes into account where each student's strengths and needs lie (Beaudrie, Ducar, & Potowski, 2014; Carreira, 2012; Parra, 2013; Tomlinson, 1999).

Another point of agreement among investigators on the instructional design of HL classes is the advantage of creating a bilingual environment (Anderson, 2008; García, 2009; Lacorte & Canabal, 2003; Macaro, 2001; Nichols & Colón, 2000). In the same way that García (2009) explains that HL classes should work within a dynamic bilingualism paradigm in which bilingual speakers make use of both of their languages as they need them; Martínez (2007) talks about a "forward biliteracy" where HLLs use multiple resources from both languages and cultures to express themselves; and Lacorte and Canabal (2003) posit codeswitching as a pedagogical strategy in bilingual methodology. Anderson (2008) reminds us that the "notion of two developed and separate language systems operating independently of each other as well as of broader environmental factors is considered naïve" (p. 84) and that bilingualism is necessary for identity formation. Along these same lines, Velasco and García (2014) discuss the concept of *translanguaging*, originally posited by Williams (1996) and further developed by García (2009), who proposed it as a theory of learning for bilingual minority populations. Within this framework, bilinguals are not considered speakers of an L1 and an L2 but individuals with a single linguistic repertoire from which they draw features as needed depending on the social or cultural context. What this means in the SHL classroom is that bilingual writers have writing strategies that are unique (Cumming, 1990). Examples of these are back translations (writing in Spanish and then translating the word to English to make sure the meaning fits the writer's intention), rehearsing (searching and trying out the best fitting word within someone's linguistic inventory), and postponing (writing the word in English and then returning to it at the end) (Velasco & García, 2014).

Due to meager or no access to Spanish-language instruction, lack of status—and therefore, use—of the HL, and/or pressure from the majority language, the SHL classroom is often the first time that SHLLs have a chance to write or even read in their HL. Therefore, students need opportunities for low stakes writing, that is, frequent and informal writing such as journaling or drafts of an essay with minimal or no grading involved (Elbow, 1997). These types of activities will reduce the affective filter and allow students to feel more comfortable. Along the same lines, Mikulski

and Elola's (2011) findings support the idea proposed by Colombi (1997) for a curriculum that takes students from less cognitively demanding writing activities to more challenging ones. They also agree that frequent, low-stakes writing helps students increase their degree of familiarity and comfort with the process of writing in the HL. As Schwartz (2003) has noted, SHLLs display a lack of confidence in their linguistic abilities. Going from informal letters written to a friend or family member and gradually working towards more formal texts helps students' writing grow. Another area of research suggests that students should be provided with abundant reading materials from which to choose for which they have low accountability (McQuillan, 1998). It can help students build vocabulary and notice how expressions or syntactic structures work. This connection between reading and writing steps away from the traditional foreign language pedagogies that have students memorize vocabulary lists, and it parallels how a native speaker in a Spanish-speaking country would go about accomplishing these tasks (Mikulski & Elola, 2011).

As part of process-writing, peer reviews have been recommended. However, evidence from the studies conducted is contradictory. While in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1992) analysis there was an improvement in content, organization and vocabulary; grammar did not improve. In work by Lockhart and Ng (1995), students' feedback centered on content not on language use. On the other hand, other research showed peer comments addressed language form and not content (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Paulus, 1999). Of course, given SHLLs intuitive knowledge of their language and their lack of a metalinguistic one, it would seem logical that they would be stronger in content and organization (Potowski, Jegerski, & Morgan-Short, 2009; Schwartz, 2003). In their study on SHLLs, Jegerski and Ponti (2014) found some limitations on the peer review process due to the partial metalinguistic knowledge of the reviewers. All this research points to the need to walk students through structured peer reviews. While SHLLs may find it easier to look at micro-level errors—spelling, grammar—and they should have opportunities to do so since this will provide some immediate satisfaction; they should receive assistance in macro-level corrections such as content and organization.

A student-centered approach incorporates collaborative brainstorming, free-writing, personally meaningful topics, peer reviews and group editing. As literacy theory has developed from product to process to post-process oriented, it grew from seeing writing as a linguistic endeavor to a cognitive activity to a social act with genre theories that emphasize the part that communities play in its development. This new understanding of writing sees it as a public, interpretive and situated activity (Kent, 1993). The literacy pedagogy that the New London Group (NLG) has termed *multiliteracies* to encapsulate “the realities of increasing local diversity and cultural differences” (1996, p. 64; also referred to as multiple literacies by Street, 2000) proposes four curricular components that fall in line with the development of literacies in SHL.

The NLG (1996) defines Situated Practice as “[i]mmersion in experience and the utilization of available discourses, including those from the students' lifeworlds and simulations of the relationships to be found in workplaces and public spaces” (p. 88). The focus is on communicating in the ‘here and now’, on learners' personal experiences, and on the spontaneous expression of their thoughts, opinions and feelings, without conscious reflection or metalanguage. Parra (2013) points out that the multiliteracies approach of the NLG creates a pedagogy in which all forms of mean-

ing—language included—are reformulated by their users as they see fit for the particular cultural needs of the Hispanic communities.

The second component, Overt Instruction, refers to “[s]ystematic, analytic, and conscious understanding. In the case of multiliteracies, this requires the introduction of explicit metalanguages which describe and interpret the Design elements of different modes of meaning” (p. 88). It involves creating scaffolded learning activities, not just drills and memorization. It also requires giving students the metalanguage they need in order to engage in the type of editing and reviewing that goes beyond surface changes.

Critical Framing (CF) requires “[i]nterpreting the social and cultural context of particular Designs of meaning. This involves the students’ standing back from what they are studying and viewing it critically in relation to its context” (p. 88). It comprises drawing on the metalanguage that was developed through overt instruction to direct learners’ attention to relationships among elements within the linguistic system as well as relationships between language use and social contexts and purposes. CF thus engages the ability to critique systems and their relations to other systems in terms of power, ideology, and values. CF fits precisely into the critical pedagogy approach that guides students to analyze power relationships as they exist and gives them the tools to change them.

The last component proposed by the NLG is Transformed Practice (TP). The authors describe it as “[t]ransfer in meaning-making practice, which puts the transformed meaning to work in other contexts or cultural sites” (p. 88). Writing an analytic essay about a text that has been read would be one common academic example. The focus is on the process of designing meaning to suit the constraints of both immediate and larger sociocultural contexts. TP is where SHLLs could put their acquired skills to use.

Kern (2004) provides some specific examples that offer direct application to the SHL classroom. Reading journals, where students choose the material, indicate why they chose it, summarize the text, provide a personal response, and reflect on the process of reading—what was challenging, how they dealt with it—provide both situated practice and critical framing. Lessons based on students’ comments get into overt instruction. An activity Kern suggests for transformed practice has been part of SHL instruction for some time. Translation, and the discussion that stems from it, makes students aware of word choice but also how word-to-word correspondence does not always exist and more on point still, it opens up a dialog on how to deal with metaphorical and/or culture-specific expressions and how to reinterpret them in the target language.

Work by Orellana, Dorner, and Pulido (2003) delved into the experiences of SHLLs as interpreters and translators for family members, and how they align with the literacy skills needed to interpret texts, paraphrase, summarize and display audience awareness. Martínez, Orellana, Pacheco, and Carbone (2008) have developed curricula that use the translating experiences of HLLs to develop their academic literacies. It is central to note that the overt instruction of literacy-based teaching does not imply a linear structure of teaching grammar, paragraph structure, idea development and essay organization but a collaborative activity where models are used as suggestions and sources of ideas to be discussed in class (Kern, 2004).

## Developing Spanish Heritage Language Learners' Writing

### *Conversational Discourse*

Putting it all together, the first step is to decide where the students' level of proficiency lies, realizing it will not be the same for everyone. A first prompt that asks them to write a letter to a relative or to write a dialogue between themselves and someone they know would help with this formative assessment. This task provides a purpose and an audience, both required for the development of advanced literacy (García, 2002). Whether the recipient of the text is monolingual or bilingual must be clearly specified, as the definition of audience for the bilingual writer is two-fold: the person addressed and the language(s) used. As Grosjean (1997) has pointed out, bilinguals have three different modes of speaking available to them. In the case of Spanish/English bilinguals, they can operate in monolingual mode in English, when the interlocutor is a monolingual English speaker. Option two is monolingual mode in Spanish when the interlocutor is a monolingual Spanish speaker. Thirdly, when two bilingual speakers are communicating, they know they are able to do it in bilingual mode. Therefore, students must know whom they are addressing in order to produce the appropriate code. If they are writing to a relative who does not speak English, they will engage in monolingual mode in Spanish; however, if the recipient speaks both languages, bilingual mode will result. Pre-writing activities that discuss audience and its relevance in the writing process are pertinent at this point. In the early stages, many students will find reviewing a classmate's work overwhelming. The instructor should ask reviewers to target a specific area, and it should be limited to a topic that was discussed in class. Suggestions include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or pluralization. This first assignment might be given a completion grade only, keeping in mind the possible anxiety for students who have never written in their heritage language.

### *Descriptions*

A description is the next activity in Chevalier's model, and it lends itself to a pre-writing reading activity. It could involve the entire class, small groups or individuals. Places, people, or objects are all possibilities. The key is letting students find a topic that motivates them. An audience needs to be determined, and again, it could be different for every student. As far as topics to review, students' linguistic repertoire will dictate. They might include the *ser/estar* distinction (the two copulative verbs in Spanish, *to be*), irregular present tense verbs, or noun phrase agreement. Targeted peer reviewing should follow with the rubric that will be used before they turn in the final draft. At this point, instructors can comment on content and organization but should refrain from correcting sentence-level errors. Let students know the location of the errors and—either individually or with peers—ask them to make their own corrections. As students get more exposure to grammar and orthography points, the instructor can start indicating non-target forms.

### *Narratives*

From a grammatical point of view, a narrative provides the groundwork for practicing the preterite/imperfect distinction, which—depending on the level of the students—may or may not be necessary. It is also an appropriate time to teach



composing overtly: introductions, sequencing, cohesion, and conclusions. The previously targeted peer reviews need to be bolstered by showing students how they also can edit their own work. For instance, Schwartz (2003) found that SHLLs tend to paraphrase, which she attributes to a lack of vocabulary. Teaching students how to use both bilingual and Spanish dictionaries as well as how to maximize the use of the spell-check function of the word processing software are extremely valuable. SHLLs also tend to produce calques, word for word translations of set phrases. They may be unaware that a metaphorical expression in English may not have the same meaning in Spanish. After giving examples, students can be set out to look for idioms that they translated literally from English in their own work. As far as content is concerned, narratives are prime material for family histories, stories of migration, remembering how and from whom students acquired their languages.

### *Evaluations and Explanations*

Writing reviews or critiques of a familiar book or movie falls under the evaluative mode. These types of activities provide students with vocabulary to add to their lexicon. They also lend themselves to different forms of literacy. For example, students could exchange opinions via blogs or other forms of social media. Explanations also fit well into these types of activities. This is the time to help students work on their macro-level editing. Working from a list of linking words and set phrases, they can start introducing them into their writing. It is common for SHLLs to think in English and translate to Spanish when they write, especially in cases of formal or graded writing (Martínez, 2007). One of the effects tends to be a high frequency of passive voice, not only more often than is found in Spanish discourse but also extended to contexts where Spanish does not allow it. For some metalinguistic insight, this is the point where teaching students how to convert passive sentences to active voice or to passive *se* constructions (a construction in Spanish that allows avoidance of passive voice) would be useful.

### *Arguments*

The last stage in the model is the traditional academic paper. Whether students work on developing a persuasive or interpretative paper, they will most likely need to use verb tenses in the subjunctive. This is an area of grammar where many SHLLs have shown loss or incomplete acquisition (Montrul, 2009). Instructors may have to step back from working on writing and explain subjunctive formation and usage. It is important to keep in mind that while for some students, academic papers are a format they need to master; others may not find it worthwhile. The model in Table 1 is ample enough to allow to leave out the last stage. Furthermore, how many of the assignments discussed here can be completed depends on the duration of the class and what other work is included. Where in the model to start depends on the proficiency level of the class.

### **Future Directions**

Mikulski and Elola (2011) have suggested that more analyses on the writing behavior of SHLLs are needed, as they would provide information to assist in developing appropriate curricula. Evaluations of the strategies for teaching writing

that have been proposed are essential as well. Another area of research that remains unattended is how current critical pedagogies for SHLLs can share space in a classroom setting with current literacy development practices. If the intent is to inform students about how language is used in society in order to be able to make individual decisions, then they also need to have access to different language varieties from which to select (Mrak, 2011). For instance, the genres students will need to learn will vary, depending on the intended purpose of their studies. The pursuit of a degree in Spanish will require different literacies than the desire to apply the knowledge of the language in the community. How do we deal with the heterogeneity of the classroom in order to give students a voice that is able to externalize what they want to take away from the class?

Furthermore, recent research on literacy studies has taken the field from the multiliteracies proposed by the NLG to multimodal forms under critical media literacy (Hobbs, 2011; Kellner & Share, 2007). As consumers of these forms, HLLs need to be taken into account. This is the time to extend these multiliteracies approaches to the varied forms in which our students are involved (Velázquez, 2017). A class project in which students create a photographic map or video of their Hispanic community works well. However, Mirra, Morrell, and Filipiak (2018) warn that as instructors, we run the risk of orienting digital literacy towards deficit-oriented and protectionist views, a warning that is very pertinent when teaching a minority language. These investigators propose the need for “digital invention,” where students are not just critical consumers but inventors in order to reconstruct power structures. This would entail helping students analyze the power structures behind digital representations of the Hispanic communities and then create new representations from their point of view.

## Conclusion

Combining product, process and post process theories of literacy with the critical pedagogy of the SHL classroom calls for an integrated approach. Going beyond process-writing, post-process theories are ideally suited to SHL literacy development because they open up a dialogue with students that fits with the critical pedagogies that are vital in the classroom. As Kastman Breuch (2002) points out, teaching (within post-process theory) is not about “mastery of content” but a dialogue “*about content*” (p. 145, emphasis in the original). Product, process and post-process writing are all complementary. As Kern (2004) suggests, what is needed is a comprehensive pedagogy of literacy. Combining a product approach such as the use of models, grammar study, sentence-combining and paragraph structure analysis can be accompanied by the collaborative methodologies of process writing.

In turn, a word of warning needs to go out so as not to fall in the trap of a strict notion of process that does not take into account genres that are meaningful and useful to the students. Furthermore, all of the activities need to be developed within a critical pedagogy that makes learners conscious of their choices and provides them with the sociolinguistic awareness to make informed decisions about the language variety they select for a particular setting. At the same time, such a methodology would afford students the prospect of developing their writing abilities in genres of interest to them. It is the creation of a learning environment that allows participants

not just to have choices but to create them. In Ruiz's words (1997), "[t]eachers do not empower or disempower anyone, nor do schools. They merely create the conditions under which people can *empower themselves*, or not" (p. 323, emphasis in the original).

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