# *APRENDAMOS A LEER Y A ESCRIBIR*: DEVLEOPING LITERACY COMPETENCIES IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE HERITAGE CLASSROOM

Jenny M. Castillo
Hunter College (CUNY)

## Introduction

Based on the latest US Census, the Hispanic/Latino population has increased steadily over recent decades. Furthermore, the growth of the Hispanic population, in particular of US born Hispanics or so called heritage speakers, will continue to increase through the first half of the 21st century (Guzman, 2001; Carreira, 2003; US Census Bureau, 2004). These changing demographics are affecting the use of Spanish in this country significantly. After English, Spanish is the language most widely used in the home (Colombi & Roca, 2003; Carreira, 2003; Lynch, 2003; Shin & Bruno, 2003). A possible explanation for this particular trend is that normally children born in the United States acquire Spanish because of its use in the home or with relatives and community members. The level of proficiency in the language that these heritage learners (HL) possess covers a broad spectrum that ranges from those who are receptive bilinguals to those who are immigrant students dominant in Spanish (Colombi & Roca, 2003; Beckstead & Toribio, 2003; Rodriguez Pino, 1997). Heritage learners come from various ethnic backgrounds, with differing levels of literacy in Spanish, and may speak different dialects of the maternal language ranging from stigmatized forms to standard varieties (Lewelling, Kreeft Peyton, & Winke, 2001; Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000; Valdes, 1981). Today, the Spanish heritage learner is considered someone born and educated entirely in the United States, whose family members use Spanish restrictedly (Lynch, 2003). As Lynch indicates the term *heritage learner* should not invoke any lesser or greater degree of bilingual competence through classifications such as "second," "third," or "fourth" generation. For example, when Lynch studied the use of Spanish among Cuban Americans in Miami, he observed that some third-generation Spanish speakers reflect higher levels of grammatical and discourse proficiency than some second-generation speakers. He also found consistent similarities between the grammatical systems of some second- and third-generation Spanish HL learners and the grammatical systems of advanced Spanish second language (L2) learners. Lynch observed that many HL learners were sometimes "grammatically indistinguishable from advanced L2 learners with regard to subject pronoun expression, adjective-noun agreement, *ser/estar* distinction, expression of aspect and hypotheticality, mood variability, and the occurrence of lexical 'Anglicisms' " (2003, p. 31).

Ana Roca (2003) points out that one of the most important yet difficult aspects of Spanish language development for heritage students is academic writing. Many Latinos fail to continue the development of advanced literacy in the ancestral language as they become more proficient in English. Courses for heritage learners aim at developing the literacy skills that go beyond basic reading and writing. Many research studies conducted in the last two decades have shown that bilingualism and biliteracy provide cognitive and social advantages to students (Cummins, 1989; Hakuta, 1986; Zentella, 1997). As is well

known, academic writing requires a greater mastery of a more extensive range of linguistic features than everyday colloquial forms of written and spoken Spanish.

Using these findings as a point of departure, this article examines the validity of a writing assessment project along with the integration of literary texts used in six intermediate Spanish heritage language classes at a New York City high school and the role the project played in the development of the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Literary texts were used to improve reading skills, introduce grammatical forms, and teach writing styles, while knowledge of grammatical forms facilitated the comprehension and analysis of literary texts. Through reading and writing the HL students were able to improve their grammatical competence and develop content knowledge.

The investigation addresses these three research questions:

- How does the integration of literature facilitate grammar instruction for a diverse group of HL learners?
- What role does the writing assessment project play in the development of language skills, creativity and critical thinking, and in the creation of a collaborative learning environment?
- How does the project serve as a motivational tool in the development, integration, and maintenance of the maternal language?

First, we shall present a brief overview of some the latest research that has been carried out on the role of literature in the understanding of grammatical forms, as well as summarize the latest literature regarding process-oriented writing instruction.

## Brief Literature Overview

### *a) The Role of Literature in Grammar Instruction*

According to empirical research, learners acquire greater knowledge of grammatical forms when they are presented in meaningful contexts (Shook, 1994; Leow, 1997; Lee, 2002). The integration of literary texts in grammar instruction focuses the learner's attention to the language forms and aids in unveiling the form-meaning connections. The exploration of literary texts not only develops students' target culture and language competence and proficiency, but also provides opportunities for learners to use their cognitive skills and to interact with one another through sharing ideas in addition to improving communicative competencies (Shook, 1996; Wright, 2000; Lange, 1999; Scott & Huntington, 2002; Donato & Brooks, 2004; Shrum & Glisan, 2005). In general, literature may serve as a medium for providing comprehensible, meaningful input for language acquisition. It can also be a tool for the study and examination of grammatical structures and patterns (Frantzen, 2002; Paesani, 2005; Cheung, 1995; Williams, 2005). Furthermore, Cheung (1995) argues that comprehension and analysis of literary texts are only possible when accompanied by an investigation of the structures and patterns present. For Frantzen (2002) the importance of linguistic analysis of literary

texts permits learners to examine how an author uses language to express ideas. So the reading of literary texts provides the basis for the development of writing skills in the HL class. Many studies have demonstrated the close link and inseparable connection between extensive reading of literary texts and the improvement and development of writing skills (Cheung, 1995; Herman, 1986; Kauffmann, 1996; Swaffar, 1991; Scott, 1996; Frantzen, 2002). For Krashen (1984) reading may serve as comprehensible input for the development of writing proficiency. Greenia (1992, p. 33) states, "real competence in writing must stem at least in part from the learners' reading a large volume of texts that model the types of prose they will eventually create." Herman (1986) argues that if students are asked to narrate a literary text from different perspectives, this form of writing task forces students to think analytically and imaginatively about the content of their writing. Although the studies cited only involve either English as a second language (ESL) and/or foreign language (FL) learners, these studies are relevant to us as a point of departure. Our heritage students are not second language learners; they are bilinguals with varying degrees of abilities in each of their languages. We must build upon the existing research and be more focused on our heritage students' needs.

*b) The Writing Process*

Research on writing instruction recognizes that in order to teach writing it is necessary to understand how people write (Zamel, 1982). The process model of writing combines three general categories of strategies: planning, composing and revising or editing. Process-oriented approaches to foreign language writing focus on three main components: pre-writing, writing, and post-writing activities. The purpose of pre-writing activities is to prepare the learner to compose a first draft. In this type of activity students may brainstorm ideas, create vocabulary lists or develop an outline. When students are ready to compose, they carry out a specific writing activity that takes into consideration the purpose and audience of writing. The post-writing phase involves revision and re-writing. Students may write multiple drafts before producing the final product. Thus writing serves as a form of communication as well as a form of language practice. Learners apply explicit knowledge to production tasks to communicate a message (Williams, 2005).

For Scott (1996) the writing tasks should engage students in the writing process. She indicates that part of the writing process should involve students focusing their attention on grammar as an imperative phase of such process. That will help them organize their ideas.

In the last decade many researchers have focused much of their attention on the feedback, revision, and evaluation aspects of the post-writing process (see Scott, 1996; Reichelt, 2001; Ferris, 2003; Williams, 2005; Hedgecock & Lefkowtiz, 1992). Studies have shown that the revision process is beneficial. Feedback of the writing process can come in many forms, such as peer, self, and/or instructor evaluation. According to research studies, peer review encourages collaboration, negotiation of meaning, critical thinking, as well as promoting a sense of classroom community. It stimulates confidence

in addition to self- and co-respect (Byrd, 2003; Williams, 2005). Moreover, both revision and rewriting serve as valuable skills that lead to overall improved writing performance (Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Semke, 1984; Scott, 1996). The next sections of our study will focus on all the previously stated aspects as observed in the six Spanish HL high school classes.

**The Study Profile**

The study employed mixed methods. On the one hand, quantitative data were collected and analyzed from two questionnaires, one designed for teachers and the other for students. Qualitative data was also examined as students' final projects were thoroughly analyzed. Next, in order to increase the validity of the findings from the surveys, a total of 3 research assistants (3 Spanish graduate assistants from the Department of Romance Languages at Hunter College) and I conducted interviews, carried out classroom observations, collected and recorded data, as well as writing samples and assessment projects from the six Spanish intermediate HL classes at a New York City public high school for a period of two years (2005-2006). The research assistants spent two semesters in each of the six HL classes. They frequently met with the Principal Investigator/Project Director and were often advised on how to improve their analytical eye. In addition, each one of them went through one intensive training session on how to take focused observation pedagogical notes. All three research assistants had also had previous high school teaching experience either in their countries of origin or in one of New York City's public schools. The observations focused mainly, but not solely, on how students developed their writing skills through the integration and analysis of authentic and appropriate literary texts; all of this in conjunction formed part of an extensive assessment project that students had to develop during a one-year period. I served as consultant, advisor, Principal Investigator and Project Director for this particular secondary school and worked closely with the research assistants, high school Spanish teachers and HL learners, as well as with the principal of the high school. I was the representative for both the Department of Curriculum & Teaching of the School of Education and the Department of Romance Languages of the School of Arts and Sciences at Hunter College. This pilot program involved the collaborative efforts of Hunter College and the New York City public high school in the borough of Manhattan.

**Research Methodology and Procedures**

A total of 118 writing samples and projects were analyzed. Four Spanish teachers, one principal and 92 heritage speakers were interviewed. Student participants ranged in age from 15 to 17 years. At the beginning of the program students were also surveyed in order to obtain a better sense of their ethnic background, personal interests, and levels of proficiency in the Spanish language, all of which would help with instruction and preparation of the program. Students' input was very much part of the development and implementation of the program. So students were also co-creators and co-evaluators of this project. Students were US born but of different Hispanic backgrounds. Approximately 55 percent were from Dominican background, 24 percent from Puerto Rican origin, 12 percent from Mexican ancestry, two percent from Cuban

homes, and seven percent from other Latin American backgrounds such as Colombian and Ecuadorian. The Spanish teachers used the ethnic background, students' interests, levels of language proficiency, and age information in order to make appropriate literary text selections and to conduct lively class discussions that would help emphasize the cultural and heritage origins of the learners as well as promote and stimulate the desire to write and read in Spanish. Among the literary authors selected were: Julia Álvarez, Sandra Cisneros, Nicolas Guillén, Gabriel García-Márquez, Junot Díaz, Juan Bosch, Federico García Lorca, Esmeralda Santiago, Isabel Allende, and Rosario Ferré, among others.

All 92 participants of this pilot program were required to complete the one-year language sequence. Thirty-six of the participants were male and fifty-six were female. Most participants (78 percent) had previously studied Spanish as a foreign language either in middle school or junior high school for a total of one or two years prior to being in this pilot program. Seventy-two students indicated they spoke some Spanish at home or in their communities and were proud of their heritage. At the start of the program seventy-eight of the HL learners indicated that they felt they needed much improvement in their writing of Spanish as well as a better understanding of the Hispanic cultures and the literary works. Before the implementation of the assessment project eighty-three students stated that they did not intend to continue to use Spanish other than at home and that they would not consider studying the language if they were to attend college.

The principal goal of this project was to analyze how the HL students progressed in their understanding and knowledge of Spanish grammar along with the integration of major literary excerpts. To achieve this goal, grammatical features from the courses textbooks, *Entre Mundos* and *Nuevos Mundos*, were presented in context. The whole collaborative team (the Spanish teachers, the research assistants, the high school principal, and I) met at least once a week in order to discuss the appropriate selection of literary works and the integration of these texts in the teaching of the different grammatical patterns. The implementation of the literary excerpts supplemented the grammatical explanations and exercises of the textbooks. To conclude the study of each grammatical trait, students prepared a written text modeled on the literary excerpt that had begun the instructional unit. Following a process-oriented approach (which included peer review, self-evaluation, and teacher feedback) the HL learners prepared multiple drafts of each text. Students were expected to present their written texts in a portfolio form. Portfolios were to be presented at the end of each cyclical term and the final cumulative assessment project was evaluated a final time at the end of the academic year of the program. This final evaluation tool contained each of the drafts prepared by the students over the one-year period as well as the model literary excerpts, critical commentaries prepared by students as introductions to the assessment project, along with the peer review, self evaluation and reflection, and teacher feedback. The projects of the HL learners were evaluated on the progress and completion of the writing procedures and the quality of the final product.

Learners were provided with guidelines for the completion of the assessment project. These guidelines included an overview of the project; a description of the

writing, editing, and revising processes; requirements for the major final product; a timeline; and a grading system. Students were made aware of their responsibilities and of the criteria used to assess their work.

Among the many different literary pieces selected for grammar instruction, literary analysis, class discussions, and writing models for student writing were: "*La muñeca rota*," "*La increíble y triste historia de Eréndira y su malvada abuela*," "*Borges y yo*," "*Balada de los dos abuelos*," "*Los niños no se aguantaron*," "*El pastel de tres leches*," *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, and excerpts from both "*Cuando era puertorriqueña*" and "*La casa en Mango Street*," as well as other works of Hispanic literature. What made these various literary selections appealing and pedagogically appropriate for these HL learners was that they allowed students to explore various aspects of themselves, aspects of their identity, heritage, society, community and culture and provided them with a real reason to write and express their inner thoughts and world. This led to development of linguistic skills, reinforced cultural pride and increased self-esteem as well as increased accuracy and proficiency in academic writing. In addition, these literary works provided opportunities for frequent interactions in Spanish among students and exposed them to a variety of registers of their own dialect as well as other dialects. This type of exposure also served as a medium to create a collaborative and respectful learning environment since students were presented with a broad spectrum of dialectical registers and were able to understand and respect each other's cultural heritage. Also, from both literary and pedagogical perspectives, the literary selections were chosen for the way in which they manipulated the Spanish language to tell the stories in a variety of styles and from different points of view. Each literary excerpt was chosen based on its specific grammatical and stylistic content and was integrated into the study of grammatical forms based from both textbooks used during the one-year period. A total of 16 literary excerpts were used in each academic year. Each literary text was implemented and introduced for its cultural and literary value as well as for its use as comprehensible input for grammatical instruction and for its function as a model for the written texts students created as part of their final assessment project. Each of the literary selections was applied practically in the same fashion and used approximately for a two-week period, the usual length of each instructional unit.

There were several grammatical forms that were addressed in the HL courses, such as the formation and usage of both the simple and complex forms of the present tense, the distinction between the preterit and the imperfect, the use of the present and past subjunctive, relative pronouns, future tense, adjective agreement, and *ser* and *estar*, among other grammatical structures. The grammatical patterns that were selected were those with which HL students normally have the most difficulty in understanding or applying correctly either orally or in written form. The stylistic content also targeted two major pedagogical and linguistic issues among Spanish HL learners: orthography and syntax.

In order to demonstrate how literary excerpts were used in this project for the purposes stated previously, the following segment will describe one particular model that was used in the Spanish HL classes, specifically the excerpt presentation of "*Cuando era*

*puertorriqueña*" (*When I was Puerto Rican*: of course the Spanish version of the novel was used) for the introduction of the preterit and imperfect.

*a) The Literary Model*

At the beginning of each unit, students would normally watch a 20 or 30-minute video which serves both as a motivational tool and a source for class discussion from either a literary or cultural perspective to serve as a source of background stimulus for students' writing. Students were provided handouts that would ask them about the storyline, events, holidays, characters, atmosphere, themes, etc. Students were asked to use their own words to create a storyline, describe the characters or important historical events, and portray the atmosphere of the scene. For example, before introducing the grammatical patterns of the preterit and the imperfect (used in the literary excerpts from "*When I was Puerto Rican*"), the HL learners were asked to watch the video *Mi Puerto Rico* (Simon & Ortiz, 2000). But before students watched the video they were asked to come up with at least five things they knew or had heard or read about Puerto Rico. This warm-up activity served as a stimulus or as a bridge for a brief discussion about Puerto Rico before the video presentation. Students who were not of Puerto Rican descent also shared information about their particular heritage background by indicating the similarities and differences with those stated about Puerto Rico. This type of brief discussion served as a scaffold for the presentation of the video. The selected video was used for its rich cultural aspects and information. That helped students gain a better connect with the history and culture of Puerto Rico. Students familiarized themselves with the unusual political relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico and with the issue of statehood that continues to divide the island's population. In addition, teachers used images from http://images.google.com in order to help their students decode some of the cultural signifiers that form part of the Puerto Rican identity that the author, Esmeralda Santiago, described in the excerpts of her novel used in the HL classes. To make the reading more accessible to students they were given a list of vocabulary words that the class studied and reviewed before the presentation of the literary piece of work. To visualize the setting of the novel, better students were asked to look up several objects mentioned such as: *guayabera* (open-necked shirt), *bohío* (hut with zinc roof in rural Puerto Rico), *quinqué* (hurricane lamp), *piraguas* (snow cone), *sofrito* (stew), *morcilla* (blood sausage), and *coquí* (small frog) by using an Internet search engine to locate images. Teachers brought some typical objects of Puerto Rican culture to class. Students were fascinated by this experience, when the objects and the culture became tangible.

Excerpts from Santiago's novel were selected for its presentation of the grammatical point in question and style of writing but also for its meaningful content that provided interesting material for class discussions and writing assignments. Whether from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba or any other Hispanic country, all of the HL learners could identify with the transitions in Santiago's life, her family life and cultural traditions. Among the topics discussed were *machismo*, cultural differences between mainland America and Puerto Rico, the struggle to adapt to

a new environment with each move their parents made, including different schools, change of friends, and the loss of support offered by the extended family.

Teachers began class discussion using the prologue of Santiago's novel. Normally, the instructors would either have the students read the material at home first or in small groups in class, depending on the complexity and length of the text used. For this particular excerpt, teachers asked their students to read the text at home. In the prologue, "*Cómo se come una guayaba*" ("How does one eat a guava"), the author introduces the topic of cultural identities and dualities shared by people who are part of two worlds. There is a cultural comparison between the author's Puerto Rican and US mainland identities. Santiago reveals her personal perspective on the complex duality of being bicultural through a description of the *guava* (a popular tropical fruit from Puerto Rico). For Santiago the guava symbolizes or acts as a metaphor of her past. That typical product from the island brings back her youthful fond memories of Puerto Rico. She relates her experience of seeing a basket of guavas on display in the produce section of a New York City grocery store. Unlike the guava of her childhood that she recalls as a pinkish yellow fruit plucked freely from a bush and bursting with flavor, the grocery store guava appears green and hard, and it is sold in the exotic fruit section at a high price.

Several discussion questions were presented, such as "How does the author use the food to 'construct' cultural difference?" The questions were used to help students understand the text but also to stimulate critical thinking and to help them develop a better understanding of their cultural and heritage identity. Many students spoke about how some of their relatives or parents had described, during family gatherings, experiences similar to those expressed by the author. Some teachers asked their students to imagine if they had been in a similar situation how they thought they would have felt and coped with it. Some students mentioned that they had similar experiences when they had traveled during summer vacations to their parents' or grandparents' countries of origin. This type of discussion provided them with means for a personal and cultural growth. There was a greater sense of empathy on the part of the students for people's experiencing these types of conflicts. On the other hand the text became a cultural manual of sorts as students discovered features of their own cultural heritage that were new to them.

*c) The Writing Process and Project*

After the presentation of the text and discussion session, the teachers normally focused the students' attention on the grammatical point in question, which in this case was the distinction between the preterit and the imperfect and their role in narrative structure. The teachers highlighted the past differences and aspects of the language. The instructors asked questions about the grammatical patterns found in the text and about words and phrases repeated in the story. Overhead transparencies and/or power-point presentations were used to provide further sample sentences selected from the text that contained important words and phrases that were either underlined or circled by the teachers. This helped the learners focus their attention on the targeted forms without

needless elaboration or wasted time. Afterwards, students were asked to use each verb form effectively to present the events of the story and to describe its characters and atmosphere. Learners would then exchange and discuss their findings first in small group tasks and then with the whole.

Previously we saw how some of the discussion questions focused first on the content of the text. In this new phase, however, the focus was on the grammatical structures of the text. Students paid particular attention on how targeted forms in the past were used to express different types of meaning in the text. The text itself served as a springboard for presentation and practice of the targeted grammar. The comprehension of the novel's prologue and the manipulation of meaning-bearing input preceded production and facilitated the acquisition of both past tenses in Spanish. The reading and discussion of Santiago's text and the presentation and practice of grammatical forms constituted the pre-writing phase of the writing process.

Once students had a clear understanding of the text and how grammar was used in context and were able to produce the targeted structures in practice exercises, they were ready to start the actual writing process by composing their own version of the prologue by using Santiago's text as a model in addition to the grammatical structures of the Spanish preterit and imperfect tenses. In a first draft prepared at home, students were reconstructing the literary. Learners were then asked to bring two copies of their first draft to the next class. This new phase constituted the post-writing segment of the writing process, which in this specific case dealt with peer reviews.

Students were instructed to work in pairs to provide feedback on each another's drafts. Teachers allowed the pair groups to work for approximately 20 minutes in class as they reviewed each other's work. In order for students to receive substantive feedback, the questions on the peer review guide focused specifically on the content of the written text. Also, a few questions addressed the grammatical structures used and asked about how they were used to express meaning. The peer review guide was modified for each of the sixteen written texts to reflect the different targeted forms and stylistic effects. At the beginning of the peer review session, the teachers read through the guidelines and provide suggestions for improvement. Students would then refer to the peer review guide as they read their classmates' work and gave suggestions for improvement based on the questions asked.

After the peer feedback, students were assigned to prepare a second draft at home, incorporating as much as possible the suggestions provided during the in-class peer review. This procedure was followed by the self-editing phase of the writing process. The HL learners reread and revised their draft following self-review guidelines. They looked for the appropriate use of the targeted grammatical forms in question and checked the structure and organization of their draft. Then students had to revise their written work again and had to submit their revisions to their teachers within a two-week period. The teachers provided feedback on form and content. The instructors examined each draft to determine if students had integrated their peer review comments and if something was overlooked they would make further suggestions. Once students had their teachers'

feedback, they had to prepare the final version of the written text. In this last part of the writing process, students were able to enhance their writing and editing skills as they continued to develop their communicative use of the targeted grammatical forms.

In each of the six HL classes the learners had to present their writing assessment project, which consisted of their collection and preparation of their sixteen written assignments, accompanied by the literary excerpts, their multiple drafts, and two-page self reflection. In the self-analysis learners had to reflect on the role of the project in the development of their understanding of their culture, their ancestral language, and of themselves as bilingual and bicultural individuals. Moreover, they had to express their overall impression of the program and how they felt after the completion of it. Students were free to express their opinions and were asked to select their five best-written texts and present a justification of their choice as well as an explanation of how these samples may have contributed to their writing proficiency, language maintenance, and possible development of their grammatical competence.

The teachers evaluated their students' projects based on both the writing process and the final product. Students received a grade every time they completed each of their drafts and another for the completion of each stage in the review process. The final project received a grade.

**Data Analysis**

Questionnaire responses, interview data, writing samples and drafts, assessment projects, literary excerpts, critical commentaries, self-reflections, and field observation notes were analyzed thoroughly throughout the research. The multiple sources of data in this study allowed for triangulation which helped enhance the validity of the findings (see Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 2001). The evaluation and analysis of the data collected were used to answer our three main research questions. Teachers were provided with a four-page questionnaire to elicit opinion of the program as well as to obtain feedback on their particular experiences regarding the development of their students' writing skills, literacy competency, and understanding of grammatical forms while integrating literary excerpts in their teaching during their participation in the program. Students also answered a five-page questionnaire that allowed them to provide feedback about the program, their sense of accomplishment, the assessment project, and to express their attitude toward their ancestral language and culture both before and after taking their Spanish classes. The questionnaires combined a Likert-scale (5 point scale, 5= very successful, 1= unsuccessful), short-answer questions and open-ended comments. Furthermore, all data collected conformed to Bachman and Palmer's (1996) evaluation principles of validity, authenticity, credibility and reliability. In analyzing and processing the survey data, the returned surveys were checked for completeness, accuracy, and uniformity.

**Results**

Based on personal observations, interviews, and extensive collected data, the program's project, techniques, and approaches contributed favorably to a cooperative and

collaborative learning environment. Students were able to become active participants of their own learning process, and, most importantly, the collaborative classroom environment promoted improvements in their understanding of complex grammatical structures, helped develop their reading and writing skills in the heritage language, and stimulated their critical thinking skills and their intellectual curiosity for their culture, their heritage, and their maternal language. Both students and teachers expressed their support for both the project and program; they found both elements valuable to the development of a learner's language competencies. For the most part, the four Spanish high school teachers emphasized how they had grown professionally with their participation in the program and were pleased that they had been able to accomplish with their students their pedagogical goals, which were to incorporate a process-oriented approach to writing, apply a simultaneous focus on the learning of skills and content, as well as presenting grammar in a contextualized fashion. Most students (84 of 92) believed that they had achieved much progress in their HL writing, which gave them a greater sense of accomplishment and pride. Based on the students' interviews, 95 percent of that particular student population expressed that they had enjoyed reading the authentic literary works selected and had learned to understand the culture of their ancestors. The Spanish instructors also emphasized that they had found the integration of the literary excerpts very useful in presenting the grammatical structures to their students and that they will continue to apply this type of format in their teaching of grammar to HL learners. The educators thought that this type of pedagogical approach and technique had fostered a strong collaborative learning environment, where teaching became student-centered with much student input.

According to the questionnaires collected from students the learners (86 percent) felt more confident in reading, speaking, and writing and that their sense of accomplishment and improvement in their proficiency skills in the HL was a direct result of the program and project. Seventy-five percent believed that this process-oriented instruction encouraged them to identify their own literacy needs, and take risks, and provided ways to address those needs within the context of the assessment project. Also, 88 percent of students expressed a desire to continue using the maternal tongue and felt greater affinity towards the maternal language and culture.

Although some teachers said that at the beginning of the program they were skeptical about employing excerpts of major literary works to teach important grammatical structures and develop writing skills, they now could appreciate the value of such integration. These instructors were able to observe directly that this type of approach increased students' contact and interaction with the heritage language and culture. That in turn helped in the development of literacy competency in Spanish.

**Conclusion**

This study illustrates the ways in which literature can be used to enhance the development of multiple competencies in the HL classroom. The literary excerpts were used to develop students' reading and writing proficiency skills and to introduce grammatical forms in context. In addition, the process-oriented approach that was

employed in the HL classes allowed students to learn valuable skills in composing, revising, and rewriting and further developed their critical thinking and creative skills in Spanish. A significant relationship was found between the integration and incorporation of literature and students' desire to continue studying Spanish and exploring their language, culture, and their own identity beyond the classroom setting.

Future research should focus on additional means on improving students' writing skills and grammar and spelling aspects of Spanish. But above all further studies should center on finding ways to promote a sense of pride in students' heritage language and culture so that learners can feel motivated to learn about themselves and manifest a desire to use and maintain the language of their ancestors.

## Works Cited

Arens, K. & J. Swaffar. "Reading Goals and the Standards for Foreign Language Learning," *Foreign Language Annals* 33, 1 (2000): 104-119.

Barnett, M. A. *More than Meets the Eye*. *Foreign Language Reading: Theory and Practice*. Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice Hall, 1989.

Beckstead, K. & A. J. Toribio. "Minority Perspectives on Language: Mexican and Mexican-American Adolescents' Attitudes toward Spanish and English," pp. 154-169 in A. Roca & M. C. Colombi, eds. *Mi lengua [My language]: Spanish as a heritage in the United States*. Washington (DC): Georgetown University Press, 2003.

Benjamin, R. "What do our Students Want? Some Reflections on Teaching Spanish as an Academic Subject to Bilingual Students," *ADFL Bulletin* 29, 1 (1997): 44-47.

Bennett, J. M. & M. J. Bennett. "Developing Intercultural Sensitivity: An Interactive Approach to Global and Domestic Diversity," pp. 147-165 in D. Landis, J. M. Bennett & M. J. Bennett, eds. *Handbook of Intercultural Training*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage Publications, 2004.

Byrd, D. R. "Practical Tips for Implementing Peer Editing Tasks in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Foreign Language Annals* 36, 3 (2003): 434-441.

Byrnes, H., & S. Kord. "Developing Literacy and Literary Competence: Challenges for Foreign Language Departments," pp. 35-73 in V. M. Scott & H. Tucker, eds. *SLA and the Literature Classroom: Fostering Dialogues*. *AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction*. Boston (MA): Heinle & Heinle, 2002.

Carrasco, R. L., & F. Riegelhaupt. "META: A Model for the Continued Acquisition of Spanish by Spanish/English Bilinguals in the United States," pp.170-197 in A. Roca & M. C. Colombi, eds. *Mi lengua* [*My language*]. *Spanish as a Heritage Language in the United States*. Washington (DC): Georgetown University Press, 2003.

Cho, G. "The Role of Heritage Language in Social Interactions and Relationships: Reflections from a Language Minority Group," *Bilingual Research Journal* 24, 4 (2000): 333-348.

Draper, J. B. & J. H. Hicks. "Teaching Heritage Languages: The Road Traveled," pp.15-35 in J. B. Webb & B. L. Miller, eds. *Teaching Heritage Language Learners*: *Voices from the Classroom*. Yonkers (NY): ACTFL, 2000.

Ferris, D. R. *Response to Student Writing*: *Implications for Second Language Students*. Mahwah (NJ): Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003.

Frantzen, D. "Rethinking Foreign Language Literature: Towards an Integration of Literature and Language at all Levels," pp. 109-130 in V. M. Scott & H. Tucker, eds. *SLA and the Literature Classroom*: *Fostering Dialogues*. *AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2002.

Guzman, B. *The Hispanic Population*. Census 2000 Brief. Washington (DC): US Census Bureau, 2001.

Herman, G. "Developing Logical Thinking and Sharpening Writing Skills in Advanced Composition Classes," *The French Review* 62, 1 (1988): 59-66.

Kauffmann, R. A. "Writing to Read and Reading to Write: Teaching Literature in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Foreign Language Annals* 29, 3 (1996): 396-402.

Lee, J. F. "Processing Spanish Future Tense Morphology Incidentally while Reading in a Second Language," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 24 (2002): 55-80.

Leow, R "The Effects of Amount and Type of Exposure on Adult Learners' L2 Development in SLA," *Modern Language Journal* 82 (1998): 49-68.

Lewelling, V. W., J. Kreeft Peyton & P. Winke. "Spanish for Native Speakers: Developing Dual Language Proficiency," in *CAL Digest Series 4: Foreign and Heritage Language Education* [online] 2001. Available: http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/spanish_native.html.

Merriam, S. B. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, rev. ed. San Francisco (CA): Jossey-Bass, 2001.

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*: *Preparing for the 21st Century*. Yonkers (NY): Author, 1996.

Nunan, D. *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Paesani, K. "Using Literature to Develop Foreign Language Proficiency: Toward an Interactive Classroom," pp.13-25 in C. J. Stivale, ed. *Modern French Literary Studies*: *Strategic Pedagogies*. New York: Modern Language Association, 2004.

_____. "Literary Texts and Grammar Instruction: Revisiting the Inductive Presentation," *Foreign Language Annals* 38, 1 (2005): 15-24.

Reichelt, M. "A Critical Review of Foreign Language Writing Research on Pedagogical Approaches," *Modern Language Journal* 85, 4 (2001): 578-589.

Romero, M. "Instructional Practice in Heritage Language Classrooms," pp.135-158 in J. B. Webb & B. L. Miller, eds. *Teaching Heritage Language Learners: Voices from the Classroom*. Yonkers (NY): ACTFL, 2000.

Santiago, E. *Cuando era puertorriqueña [When I was Puerto Rican]*. New York: Random House, 1994.

Shaffer, C. "A Comparison of Inductive and Deductive Approaches to Teaching Foreign Languages," *Modern Language Journal* 73, 4 (1989): 305-403.

Simon, S. & R. Ortiz, producers. *Mi Puerto Rico [My Puerto Rico]*. [Motion Picture]. Available from University of California Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning. Berkley (CA), 2000.

Tse, L. "Affecting Affect: The Impact of Heritage Language Classrooms on Student Attitudes," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 53, 4 (1997): 705-728.

US Census Bureau. *Hispanic and Asian Americans Increasing Faster than Overall Population*. Press Release [online], June 14, 2004.
Available: http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/race/001839.html.

Valdés, G. "Pedagogical Implications of Teaching Spanish to the Spanish-speaking in the United States," pp. 3-20 in G. Valdés, A. G. Lozano & R. García Moya, eds. *Teaching Spanish to the Hispanic Bilingual*: *Issues*, *Aims and Methods*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2005.

Williams, J. *Teaching Writing in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms*. Boston (MA): McGraw Hill, 2005.

Zamel, V. "Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning," *TESOL Quarterly* 16, 2 (1982): 195-209.