

5-2014

# A Conciousness Raising Exercise in Meaningful Literacy: ESL Female Teachers' Perspectives and Recommendations

Muna S. Alosaimi

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

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A CONCIOUSNESS RAISING EXERCISE IN MEANINGFUL LITERACY: ESL  
FEMALE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Muna S. Alosaimi

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2014

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of English

We hereby approve the thesis of

Muna S. Alosaimi

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

<u>March 26, 2014</u>	<u>Signature on File</u> David I. Hanauer Ph.D. Professor of English, Advisor
<u>March 26, 2014</u>	<u>Signature on File</u> Gloria Park, Ph.D. Associate Professor of English
<u>March 26, 2014</u>	<u>Signature on File</u> Curtis Porter, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of English

ACCEPTED

Signature on File  
Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.  
Dean  
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: A Consciousness Raising Exercise in Meaningful Literacy: ESL Female Teachers' Perspectives and Recommendations

Author: Muna S. Alosaimi

Thesis Chair: Dr. David I. Hanauer

Thesis Committee Members:       Dr. Gloria Park  
  Dr. Curtis Porter

This task-based qualitative study investigated the influence of a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy on six ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing. It also explored their perspectives on implementing this approach as pedagogy for teaching writing. Each participant was trained individually through three writing sessions; each involved one of the following genres: personal essay, narrative, and poetry. Qualitative data, collected through semi-structured interviews administered immediately after each task, suggests meaningful literacy as an initial step to promote multiple and contextualized perspectives on L2 education. Findings postulates meaningful literacy instruction as an effective pedagogical approach for humanizing ESL/EFL contexts. Specifically, meaningful literacy instruction considers writing as a personal resource, an embodied performance, and an empowering experience that fosters learners' humanities. Findings also reveal the participants' willingness to implement meaningful literacy instruction as a way to promote learners' subjectivities in the classroom.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the beginning, I thank Allah Almighty for giving me the power, insight, patience, and faith in myself to finish this thesis.

Then, I would like to thank everyone who has supported and encouraged me throughout the thesis. First, I gratefully thank my advisor: Dr. David Hanauer for his encouragement, advice and mentorship that guided my research. His insightful thoughts have supported me throughout conducting the study and writing this thesis. Also, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Gloria Park for her continuous assistance and care throughout my MA program, making my experience at Indiana University of Pennsylvania a rewarding one.

In addition, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues for being in my life, sharing with me good and difficult times, and making our cohort a friendly environment. I would also express my gratitude for those who were willing to participate in my study for their patience and cooperation. A special thank goes to my friend Badreya, for being a friend, a mom, a sister, and a reliable person to whom I could always talk about my concerns and excitement. Thanks for her for being a support in my struggles and frustrations throughout my studying in the US.

Finally, words cannot express how grateful I am to my mom, dad, grandma, sisters, and brothers for their prayers, encouragement, and support. At the end, I would like to express my appreciation to my husband and son for making me the woman I always dreamed to be.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, a shift from decontextualized and instrumental approaches for language teaching and learning to a contextualized and humanized learning experience has recognized the importance of placing the personal histories and emotional lives of language learners at the center of second language (L2) learning and teaching (Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Kramsch, 2006, 2009; Pavlenko, 2005). As such, language learning would not be only an intellectual process of learning the linguistic symbols. Rather, it would also be a human and engaging process that views the language learners as “living, thinking, experiencing and feeling” individuals, who mainly use the target language for “facilitating personally meaningful expression” (Hanauer, 2012, p. 2). Hanauer (2012) offered a classroom methodology that intended to personalize second and foreign language pedagogy through introducing a concept of meaningful literacy instruction, particularly poetry writing, which “situates the appreciation and the expression of the uniqueness of the personal experience at the center of literacy practice” (p. 10). Within this framework, working with L2 writing as a form of meaningful literacy can enhance learners’ understandings “about themselves, about the presence of others, and the diversity of thought and experience that are so much part of this world. Ultimately, learning a language is about widening one’s expressive resources and positioning oneself in multicultural and multilingual world” (Hanauer, 2012, p. 10).

By conducting this study, I aimed to raise language teachers’ and teacher educators’ awareness of the role of meaningful literacy instruction in promoting

humanized and personalized language learning experiences through integrating personal writing in three genres: personal essay, narrative, and poetry.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many researchers argued that language learning in English as a second language and English as a foreign language (ESL/EFL) classrooms is decontextualized even if it is used in a communicative setting or is based on the authentic use of language (Hanauer, 2012; Kramsch, 2006, 2009; Widdowson, 1998). This perception is based on the idea that by focusing on the cognitive, structural, linguistic, and communicative aspects of language learning, ESL/EFL pedagogy has lost the vision of “the flesh and blood individuals who are doing the learning” (Kramsch, 2006, p. 98). In other words, emphasizing language learning as an intellectual act has marginalized learners’ sense of individuality to the extent that learners’ experiences, emotions, and personal expression are avoided in the language classroom. Accordingly, it would be difficult for language learners to express themselves meaningfully in the second language or even have a sense of authorship and ownership.

Within such decontextualized contexts for language learning and use, learners’ subjectivities and individualities are rarely reached. As such, it is crucial for language and literacy educators, as well as researchers to take an actual step to find a way for promoting an effective language learning environment, in which the language learning and use is perceived as a part of the process for reflecting learners’ individualities.

## **Why Meaningful Literacy?**

### **Personal Perspective**

Receiving an A in my first research paper for the MA TESOL program made me feel satisfied because I accomplished the task successfully while using my second language. The teacher's comments on my paper were "this is an excellent paper. Also you need to include yourself." Although classifying my work as excellent was encouraging for me, the other part of her comments was a turning point for me to deeply examine my identity as a second language user and writer. I kept reading that paper many times asking myself, what is my position in that paper? Where is my voice and can I express it with agency? Those critical moments really impacted and motivated me to question my real position on language learning and writing. I asked myself: what is my purpose for learning a language? Who am I, a language owner or a second language user? Those questions guided me to investigate a methodology which might contribute to the enhancement of L2 learners' individuality and ownership in second language learning.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Meaningful literacy instruction, writing in particular, is intended to direct a process that personalizes L2 educational experience. It is a type of instruction that situates ESL/EFL learners' lived experiences, emotional expression, and self-discovery at the center of the literacy practice. For Hanauer (2012), adopting such literacy practices in the class is intended to "make the literacy work in class meaningful on the personal and social levels, as well as giving a sense of depth and ownership to the writing itself" (pp. 4-5). In this sense, writing is meaningful because it enhances the ways in which L2 writers can reveal their personally meaningful understandings to themselves or to others.

Researchers such as Hanauer (2010, 2012, in press), Chamcharatsri (2013), Loureiro-Rodriguez (2013) and Park (2013b) illuminated the role of implementing meaningful literacy instruction in ESL/EFL writing classrooms to create a humanized context for language learning and use. For instance, Chamcharatsri (2013) indicated that integrating personally and emotionally meaningful writing instruction would allow L2 writers to reflect on their personal experiences and to extend their self-understanding in relation to the cultural, linguistic, and emotional factors. Park (2013b) reported that writing about personal history allowed adult English language learners to embrace L2 writing as a platform to negotiate their identities, then to find power and legitimacy in the second language. Loureiro-Rodriguez (2013) demonstrated that using meaningful literacy pedagogy as a basis for her L2 writing class allowed the learners to be engaged in the writing process and more importantly, to extend language use for their real lives, beyond the classroom.

As such, meaningful literacy instruction seems to be an effective methodology to personalize language learning and address L2 learners' subjectivities and individualities in writing classrooms. Therefore, this study aimed to expand thinking on meaningful literacy as a humanizing pedagogy by highlighting six ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes. In this study, the ESL term refers to graduate students enrolled in an MA teacher education program in the United States whose first language is not English.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main goal for conducting this study is to expand thinking on meaningful literacy as one of the significant components for promoting a humanized language

classroom. In other words, it aimed to raise ESL/EFL teacher educators' and literacy teachers' awareness to consider meaningful literacy instruction as a pedagogical approach that highlights the personal in the process of language learning and use. As such, this study intended to investigate the understandings and attitudes of six ESL female teacher trainees towards meaningful writing events through a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy by including three writing genres—personal essay, narrative, and poetry—that might maximize the participants' chances to experience the meaningfulness of L2 writing. It also aimed to explore their perceptions of meaningful literacy instruction as pedagogy based on their experiences. By exploring the understandings of this particular population, this study could provide an insight into the value of meaningful literacy instruction from both ESL learners' and teachers' perspectives. To achieve this goal, the current study employed a task-based approach, along with interviews to add qualitative data to the participants' actual performance in the writing tasks.

### **Research Questions**

This study intended to reveal six ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing based on a brief consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy instruction. It also attempted to explore their perspectives on implementing meaningful literacy instruction in ESL/EFL writing classrooms. For this study, the research questions are set up as follows:

1. Does a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy influence ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing?
2. If so, what are their perspectives towards implementing this approach in teaching writing?

## **Significance of the Study**

This study, conducted as a brief exercise to raise awareness in meaningful literacy, proposes this pedagogy as a way for promoting a humanized language classroom. It offers an introduction to meaningful literacy by having six participants perform three writing tasks. Although this exercise cannot be considered as full-term experience of meaningful literacy, it exposed participants to the practice of meaningful literacy. In fact, this study is significant to TESOL field in many ways. First, and foremost, the current study intended to raise teacher educators' and language teachers' awareness to consider meaningful literacy as an approach for creating a contextualized learning experience and promoting L2 writing. By highlighting ESL learners/ teachers' reflections on the value of meaningful literacy, this study can add further knowledge to the effective ways for humanizing language learning and use in ESL/EFL contexts. Equally important, it proposed a methodological approach that can be easily employed in any L2 writing classroom or can be integrated as a part of teacher education programs.

Furthermore, this study is significant by considering its benefits for the participants. Since all of the participants are currently enrolled in the MA TESOL program, in which they are being prepared to teach in the future, this study was a consciousness raising exercise in which they could have the chance to experience and think about the advantages of meaningful literacy instruction and how to apply it in their future teaching contexts. Besides, participants in this study could have a greater understanding of the value of meaningful literacy practices by sharing their perceptions about its role in developing L2 writing. Moreover, as the consciousness raising exercise included different writing genres—personal essay, narrative, and poetry—this study



might be crucial to enhance the participants' genre awareness. In addition, by exploring the participants' pedagogical recommendations based on their experiences in the current meaningful literacy exercise, this research aimed to provide a detailed justification for implementing a meaningful literacy approach from teacher trainees' perspectives.

Finally, since the consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy utilized the participants' personal experiences, feelings, and beliefs as the context for language use, this study intended to deepen understanding of the real purpose for language learning and writing. In other words, it aimed to shed lights on the importance of integrating learners' personal lives in L2 writing to allow new perspectives about L2 learning and writing, in which language learning and writing are viewed as personally meaningful activities.

### **Overview of the Chapters**

There are five chapters in this thesis: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion. The second chapter reviews research literature on different areas including L2 writing, meaningful literacy, identity in L2 writing, and literature use in ESL/EFL contexts. The third chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, the procedures, and the materials employed in this study. It also highlights the strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. The fourth chapter presents the results of the study derived from analyzing the participants' responses to the interviews. It includes two types of analysis: individual analysis and group analysis. The fifth chapter intends to situate this study within second and foreign language pedagogy and research by discussing its findings in relation to research literature. It also outlines

the limitations of this study and offers pedagogical ramifications and recommendations for future research on meaningful literacy instruction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews various empirical studies conducted in different areas such as L2 writing, meaningful literacy, identity in L2 writing, and literature use in ESL/EFL contexts. It also explicates how previous studies conducted in those areas relate to the current study on the role of meaningful literacy in influencing understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing.

Research in applied linguistics and language teaching has described language learning classrooms as decontextualized contexts where learners are inclined to be barely “an intellectual entity involved in an assessable cognitive process” (Hanauer, 2012, p. 105), and thereby argued in favor of the significance of addressing learners’ subjectivities within language classrooms (Elbow, 1994; Hanauer, 2003, 2012; Kramsch, 2006, 2009; Pennycook, 2004; Widdowson, 1998). Hanauer (2012) has introduced a concept of meaningful literacy, which is mainly drawn upon the importance of producing a human learning experience through making a literacy practice, writing in particular, meaningful on the personal and social levels. As such, meaningful writing instruction should “position the individual learner and his/her personal experience, history, and social contextualization at the center of the learning experience” (Hanauer, 2012, p.108). In this sense, language learning is perceived as a human activity for facilitating personal expression and reflection. From the same standpoints, Lapidus, Kaveh, and Hirano (2013) and Park (2013a, 2013b) explored autobiographical writing as a method for constructing L2 identity. Among others Chamcharatsri (2013) utilized fear-expressing narrative as a way for expressing emotionality as a source for L2 writing, and Hanauer

(2010) employed poetry writing as a way of exploring the personal experiences of ESL learners during language learning. In particular, these studies have looked at meaningful writing as a research methodology and pedagogy with little focus on how such experiences influence perspectives of L2 writing or language learning in general.

Therefore, the current study aimed to expand thinking on meaningful literacy by exploring ESL pre-service female teachers' understanding of the value of meaningful literacy instruction and how they evaluate it as a pedagogical approach in their future teaching contexts. In particular, it addressed two main questions:

1. Does a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy influence ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing?
2. If so, what are their perspectives towards implementing this approach in teaching writing?

In this review chapter, there are eight sections: a) Learning to Write in English as a Second/Foreign Language, b) Trends in ESL/EFL Writing Instruction, c) Meaningful Literacy in ESL/EFL Contexts, d) Identity in L2 Writing, e) Use of Literature in L2 Classrooms, f) Narrative Writing, g) Poetry Writing, and h) Final Remarks.

### **Learning to Write in English as a Second/Foreign Language**

English is now the most widely taught foreign language in over 100 countries, where there is a great tendency to integrate it in the educational system while replacing other languages (Crystal, 2003). Within this global spread of English, there is an increasing value for written communication (Cumming, 2009). English writing, as a form of literacy, is necessary for language development. However, many ESL/EFL students encounter some difficulties and hindrances while learning writing. For example,

ESL/EFL writers struggle to master the ‘native-like competence’ and sound like native speakers (McKay, 2009, p. 39). However, this ‘native-like competence’ has led L2 writers to perceive themselves as outsiders and incompetent writers, which in turn, results in what Fernsten (2008) described as “negative writer identity” (p. 45). Such negative impact has put them at disadvantages of acknowledging and then improving their actual writing skills. Cook (2007) further argued that bilingual users should be considered as multicompetent users of multiple languages who show variable levels of writing proficiency in the foreign languages and must not be compared to the monolingual standards. In other words, instead of comparing ESL/EFL writers to the monolingual norms, they should be regarded as multilingual writers who have access to two or more languages and should be empowered as owners of those languages. That is to say, ESL/EFL writers should reflect their individualities in the second or foreign language and perceive themselves as multilingual writers by embracing their identity as privileged owners of both languages.

Writing is about making sense of our world. However, the decontextualized context for teaching writing is regarded as another hindrance of L2 writing. First, teaching writing in EFL classrooms is generally textbook driven and concentrates on specific genres such as academic and business ones, which in turn, demotivate students to write (Dai, 2010). Additionally, writing courses are “considered as places for students to study English rhetoric rather than to develop their voice in writing,” where producing accurate pieces of writing is more emphasized than the writer’s expression of his/her innermost thoughts (Iida, 2008, p.172). Similarly, L2 writing instruction, in which accuracy is the main goal, intends to measure the ESL/EFL writers’ outcome in relation

to a good writing sample produced by the native writers (Hanauer, in press). Thus, L2 writer's individuality is marginalized. Moreover, the mainstream approaches to ESL/EFL writing—the pattern-product approach and the process approach—appear to focus on structural, grammatical, and practical skills of writing (Badger & White, 2000; Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009). Accordingly, L2 writers struggle to maintain the lexical and structural constraints aiming at producing what sounds like an English text while writers' imagination, self-expression, and creativity are avoided (Gravin, 2013).

Besides those decontextualized contexts, L2 learners do not feel engaged and involved in the learning process (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Hanauer, 2012) and they are more likely to perceive themselves as “outsiders” who lack the ownership of the foreign language (Fernsten, 2008, p. 45 ). Accordingly, ESL/EFL writers have few chances to represent their original thoughts and emotions or have the sense of authorship of their writings (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Crème & Hunt, 2002; Dai, 2010; Fernsten, 2008; Hanauer, 2012). An example of L2 writers' lack of ownership in the decontextualized classrooms is presented in Dai's (2010) study, as one of the participants commented on writing in school:

I have to write little compositions. But most of them are argumentative essays.

Restricted by the limit of words and form, I seldom have the chance to put what I really think...just apply the useful sentence patterns and paragraph structure I've memorized. And always, the topic given was not something I wanted to write about. (Tian, female, pp. 548-549)

Another example is Bonnie, a participant in Crème and Hunt's (2002) study, who indicated that although she was good at writing essays for particular teachers, “this does

not feel honest” (p.152). This, however, illustrates how L2 writers struggle to “get a sense of authenticity or felt presence onto the page” (Crème & Hunt, 2002, p. 152).

Additionally, Chamcharatsri (2009) indicated that “L2 learners not only struggle with the language barrier, but also with the cultural and rhetorical differences between languages” (p. 5). Therefore, it is obvious that most L2 writers have some challenges in writing.

As outlined above, there seems to be a great emphasis on standardizing the writing process and the writing product, as well as erasing ESL/EFL writers’ individualities. As such, learners’ individual experiences, thoughts, feelings and life histories are less likely to be included in the agenda of writing courses. Thus, this study is intended to investigate how ESL female teacher trainees understand the role of meaningful literacy instruction in promoting the perception of L2 writing as a tool for personal expression, and how they perceive its effectiveness as pedagogy.

### **Trends in ESL/EFL Writing Instruction**

As current trends in L2 education, scholars have encouraged a genre-based approach accompanied by the process for teaching writing in order to promote L2 academic literacy (Badger and White, 2000; Cheng, 2008; Hyland, 2007). Based on Tardy’s (2003) theoretical conceptualization of the genre:

Genre is a social action that is shaped by, and in turn shapes, a social community that utilizes the genre as a means of communication; that genres coexist and interact with other genres, together forming an intertextual and interdiscursive genre system; and that a certain kind of knowledge is necessary to effectively employ, extend, and exploit genres and to participate in the genre system. (p. 9)

Furthermore, Badger and White (2000) argued that “an effective methodology for

teaching writing needs to incorporate the insights of product, process, and genre approaches; one way of doing this is to start with one approach and adapt it” (p.157). This combination of writing approaches is termed as process-genre approach, and it is identified “as a series of stages leading from a particular situation to a text, with the teachers facilitating learners’ progress by enabling appropriate input of knowledge and skills” (p. 160). The assumption behind this approach is that writing development happens when knowledge about language, the context, the purpose for the writing, and the skills in using the language are integrated in the classroom. Hyland (2007) also argued that genre based pedagogy enables ESL writing teachers to “ground their courses in the texts that students will have to write in their target contexts, thereby supporting learners to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom” (p.148). From this theoretical framework, genre is crucial for enhancing better understanding of how language is used in certain contexts as it bridges the social and cognitive understanding of L2 literacy (Hanauer, 1998). Thus, writing within a genre-based approach seems to be a socially situated act (Hyland, 2007; Iida 2011). For the purpose of this study, some evocative genres will be utilized to raise participants’ awareness of the connection between the cultural and societal factors and to enable them to find power and legitimacy in the second language (Park, 2013b).

Besides a genre-based approach for teaching writing, there is an increasing tendency to incorporate meaningful writing instruction that maximizes ESL/EFL learners’ authorship of English, as well as allows opportunities for self-expression and identity negotiation through writing (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Garvin, 2013; Hanauer, 2003, 2010, 2012; Iida, 2012; Lapidus et al., 2013; Loureiro-Rodriguez, 2013; Park, 2012a,



2012b). The next section illustrates the key principles of meaningful literacy, which is recognized effective in promoting meaningful learning experiences in ESL/EFL contexts.

### **Meaningful Literacy in ESL/EFL Contexts**

In light of Hanauer's (2012) paper, meaningful literacy instruction is a way that views language learning as a process for "facilitating personally meaningful expression" and recognizes the language learner as "a living, historically situated, individual human being" (Hanauer, 2012, p. 1). In other words, the researcher highlighted writing as a tool for unveiling an individual's lived experience and history, as well as reflecting the continuously changing identity shaped by social, cultural, linguistic, and political contextualization. Writing in this way is described as meaningful because it includes the participants' perspectives (Maxwell, 1996 as cited in Hanauer 2012). Furthermore, this movement of making writing a meaningful act is also delineated by the works of Ivanic (1998), Chamcharatsri (2013), Park (2013a, 2013b), and Loureiro-Rodriguez (2013). Park (2013a), for example, indicated that by exploring writing as a meaningful literacy event, we can "unfold our (re)constructed and (re)negotiated identities [and thereby] can begin the process of healing that is often negated and marginalized" (p. 9).

Hanauer (2012) illustrated four principles underpinning the pedagogical framework for meaningful literacy he used in his own ESL classroom. These principles inform the need for tapping into learners' personal experience to understand themselves (*autobiographical writing*), to endorse the emotional expression (*emotional writing*), to help learners cognize and appreciate their personal experiences (*personal insight*), and to make the writing process a socially situated activity inside and outside the classroom (*authentic public access*) (Hanauer, 2012, p. 4). Designing writing instruction in this way

is intended to empower writers as “the context of language use” and thus enhance the writer’s self-expression with a sense of voice and ownership (Hanauer, 2012, p. 5).

Along a similar line of research, Loureiro-Rodriguez (2013) reported a classroom-based experience that is built on a critical approach to teaching Spanish as a heritage language and Hanauer’s (2012) concept of meaningful writing. Three students enrolled in a first-year course for heritage Spanish speakers at a Canadian public university participated in the study. The researcher incorporated two types of writing tasks in the course: online discussions and individual compositions; these writing tasks encouraged students to explore their linguistic biographies and reflect on social, personal, and cultural topics that are meaningful and relevant to students’ language histories. By looking at students’ linguistic histories, Loureiro-Rodriguez (2013) indicated that integrating meaningful writing activities in the heritage language course not only enhanced students’ identity constructions but also revealed further advantages for L2 writing. Incorporating meaningful writing acts, such as linguistic biographies, enabled students to get engaged in the writing process, go beyond the academic goal and use the target language in their everyday lives, cognize the relationship between language and culture, and finally, place themselves within a larger community of the target language speakers. Furthermore, meaningful writing has been investigated in different areas such as story writing (Dai, 2010; Kirkgöz, 2012), poetry writing (Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011), autobiography writing (Chamcharastri, 2009, 2013; Lapidus et al., 2013; Park, 2013a; Park, 2013b) and responsive/expressive writing (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009).

In Park’s (2013b) study of ‘writing as a way of knowing’, she examined how

autobiographical writing influenced ESL adult college learners' multiple identity constructions, as well as their perceptions of their writing development. By investigating learners' narratives and epilogues, Park (2013b) revealed that adult ESL students' writings about their lived experiences provided them with a platform to unfold their life histories. As such, the identities of ESL writers were "(re)constructed consciously and unconsciously in a writer's attempts to understand the continuous transformation resulting from their developing life history" (p. 341). Accordingly, ESL writers became empowered as L2 authors because this act of writing "embodies writing as situated, social, and political practice offering new writers in English an opportunity to find power and legitimacy in a new language" (p. 344).

As such, meaningful literacy can be promoted by implementing writing instruction that illuminates writers' lived experience, emotional expression, and self-discovery. One might wonder: how do ESL/EFL writers understand the meaningfulness of their L2 writing tasks? In addition, to what extent does implementing meaningful writing instruction enhance L2 writing? Therefore, this study aimed to add knowledge to L2 writing studies by examining the role of meaningful literacy as a teaching approach from ESL female teacher trainees' perspectives. Since meaningful literacy entails identity negotiation, it is noteworthy to analyze identity and how it is connected to writing.

### **Identity in L2 Writing**

In one sense, connecting writing to identity is one of the significant issues discussed in L2 research (Chamcharatsri, 2009; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Elbow, 2007; Fernsten, 2008; Park, 2013a, 2013b).

Mendoza-Denton (2008) defined identity as an "active negotiation of an

individual's relationship with larger social constructs, in so far as this negotiation is signaled through language and other semiotic means" (p. 475). Fernsten (2008) defined identity as "how does language in the text signal participation, representation, or identification with a group or indicate a relationship regarding who this individual is in the world?" (p. 46).

The movement towards making writing a meaningful act is supported by Ivanič's (1998) discussion of one's identity in the writing process. There are three different but correlated selves that are socially constructed: autobiographical self, discoursal self, and self as author. The "autobiographical self" "emphasizes writer's sense of roots" and "is itself socially constructed and constantly changing as a consequence of their [writers'] developing life-history" (Ivanič, 1998, p.24). "Discoursal self" is identified as "the impression – often multiple, sometimes contradictory- which they [writers] consciously or unconsciously conveys of themselves in a particular text" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 25). The third way of regarding writer's self in the writing act is the "self as author" which refers to the extent at which the writer perceives his/her self as an author, as well as it "concerns the writer's "voice" in the sense of writer's positions, opinions, and beliefs" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 26). As Park (2013b) explicated, providing learners with the chance to explore their autobiographical self in writing, writing can be a meaningful and empowering experience. In this sense, writing helps language learners to connect their identities, understand their discoursal self, and thus develop their sense of authority in L2 writing.

Overall, this process of making writing a meaningful act is drawn on the need of utilizing L2 writing as a tool for identity negotiation and self-representation in the target language. Thus, this study explored the role of meaningful literacy in influencing ESL

female pre-service teachers' attitudes towards L2 writing and how they assess meaningful writing as an effective pedagogical practice in ESL/EFL classrooms. By this, the current study can draw L2 writing scholars' and teachers' attentions to the significance of implementing writing instruction that contributes to L2 writer's identity construction.

### **Use of Literature in L2 Classrooms**

Effective writing courses are contingent upon the most appropriate options regarding approaches, methods, materials, students' needs, and the goals that should be fulfilled by the end of the courses (Vandick, 2003). Incorporating literary materials in L2 classrooms is considered to be one of those options. However, using literature to promote L2 literacy is not widely applied in L2 context as it is in L1 education. The relationship between language literacy and literature use is still a controversial issue. On one hand, for literature use opponents, L2 learners might encounter some difficulties in understanding the literary texts in regard to vocabulary, grammatical structure, and syntax (Zyngier, 1994). Some researchers pinpointed its lack of motivation, as well as its irrelevance to train students in academic writing genres, which is highly appreciated in ESL/EFL contexts (Iida, 2012; Vandrick, 2003). Furthermore, other researchers believe that L2 writing classrooms must prepare students to master intellectual and academic writing abilities, describing literature use in L2 contexts as "time-consuming" (Iida, 2012, p. 1473), "not serious" and only "encourages self-indulgence" (Light, 2002, p. 260).

On the other hand, little empirical research on literature use in L2 contexts has explicated the value of literature in language learning (e.g., Hanauer, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2004, 2010; Iida, 2010, 2011; 2012; Paran, 2008).

Paran's (2008) evidence-based survey has reviewed existing research in the use of

literature in language learning and teaching. Drawing on some scholars' standpoints, Paran (2008) postulated the necessity to have a "reciprocal relationship between literature and language awareness" because it motivates students and encourages them to construct a relationship between the form and meaning, which is crucial for language learning (p. 53).

Hanauer's (2001b) study has also provided a brief overview of how many educators argued for the significance of integrating literature in L2 classrooms from different dimensions. Some educators supported the incorporation of literary reading tasks as a source of joy and involvement. Likewise, other educators argued that literature can raise cultural awareness of the target language. The most prevailing argument is that reading literary texts is a "beneficial task for the language learning process" (p. 298).

In addition, Vandrick (2003) addressed the value of reading literature in L2 classrooms. He illustrated that some scholars tended to consider reading and writing as inseparable skills. Also, he pointed out that reading literary works, which are described as creative works, "serves as a good model for writing" (p. 246). Literature is enjoyable and motivating for L2 writers in a way that facilitates their "investment in, and progress made in, improving their writing abilities" (p. 256). Additionally, the exposure to literature in its various genres—short stories, novels, poems, and plays—enhances learners' cultural awareness, linguistics knowledge, sophisticated thinking, and creativity. In turn, these aspects are essential characteristics for intensifying creative writing abilities.

Overall, the range of studies on literature as a literacy practice outlined above investigated literary reading, so that to date there are relatively few studies that empirically explored literary writing (Hanauer, 2004, 2010; Iida, 2012). Hanauer's (2011)

article proposed a research agenda for shifting the focus from literary reading to literary or creative writing. He argued in favor of empirical study of creative writing. He justified the importance of creative writing as a process that involves genre-specific literary knowledge; enhances the transfer of certain literary skills to different literacy practices; facilitates societal tolerance within the processes of self-discovery, multicultural communication, and interaction with the world; and postulates research uses to study personal experiences. Likewise, Iida (2012), in his empirical study of 20 EFL college students' perceptions of haiku writing in L2, found that knowledge about the processes acquired from this writing genre can be extended to English writing in general.

Moreover, some existing research has indicated the value of creative writing in developing L2 literacy. Creative writing can enhance L2 learners' linguistics knowledge (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Hanauer, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012), critical thinking skills (Tarnopolsky, 2005; Wilson, 2011), cultural awareness (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Garvin, 2013; Hall, 2005; Hanauer, 2001,2003, 2004, 2012), emotional expression (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Hanauer, 2003, 2004, 2010), self-discovery (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Hanauer, 2004, 2010; Iida, 2010, 2011) and create more engaged and personalized learning experiences (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Hanauer, 2012).

What is more, advocates of creative writing genres such as story writing (Dai, 2010; KirkgÖz, 2012), poetry writing (Garvin, 2013; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011), autobiography writing (Chamcharastri, 2013; Lapidus et al., 2013; Park, 2013a; Park, 2013b) and responsive/expressive writing (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009) indicated the value of such literary genres in unveiling L2

writers' experiences and developing personal expressive ability in the target language. Quoted from Bilton and Sivasubramaniam (2009), creative writing is "an act of creative expression", and thus it shares some concepts with expressive pedagogy (p. 303). For Fernsten (2008), expressive pedagogy encourages students to reveal themselves in writing because "it suggests that the ability to write comes not from the memorization of rules but from the true expression of our innermost thoughts" (p. 46). From Iida's (2008, 2010) studies, expressive writing in EFL classes enabled students to discover their unique perceptions of the world and made their writing outcome more focused and meaningful. That is to say, the expressive aspects implemented in creative writing tasks enable writers to take control over their writing and hold the potential for self-representation through writing.

Regarding literature use in L2 classrooms, it is more likely that literature is mainly used for reading purposes. Creative writing studies reviewed in this section investigated the efficacy of this type of writing on enhancing L2 literacy skills in general. Hence, this study intended to expand thinking on some of literary writing genres as a means to promote meaningful writing experiences and how these experiences might influence participants' perspectives and attitudes towards L2 writing. To maximize the participants' chances to experience the meaningfulness of L2 writing, I included two creative writing genres—narrative and poetry—along with a personal essay to provide participants the opportunity to experience meaningful writing events and express their preferences when comparing various writing genres.



Therefore, the following two sections explain in detail the value of narrative and poetry writing as research method and pedagogy. It also provides empirical evidence for their roles in enhancing meaningful literacy.

### **Narrative Writing**

Narrative writing has recently become an emergent research methodology and pedagogy in L2 studies in which writing, self-exploration, and reflection are interrelated fields. Advocates of narrative writing genres explicated its potentiality as a methodological and pedagogical tool for exploring an individual's lived experiences or those of his/her community (Canagrajah, 2012; Chamcharastri, 2013; Lapidus et al., 2013; Loureiro-Rodriguez, 2013; Park, 2013a; Park, 2013b). While there are a number of studies that use narrative as a research method, researchers tend to use various expressions to conceptualize personal narrative writing such as autobiography, auto-ethnography, narrative enquiry, and life history (Park, 2013b).

Using evocative writing genres such as auto-ethnography writing is a crucial component for teacher education (Park, 2013a). Lapidus et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study to investigate thoughts and beliefs revealed in auto-ethnographies of two ESL teachers trainees enrolled in a graduate teacher education program in the US. By utilizing narrative writing as a research method, ESL/EFL teachers/learners are provided with epistemological understanding of how sociocultural and personal aspects play an important role in identity construction. Thus, L2 teachers/learners can feel the ownership of the target language. Pedagogically, when ESL/EFL teachers/learners explore and evaluate their own personal experiences and are empowered as L2 users, they can consciously optimize language learning based on their personal experiences. Therefore,

Lapidus et, al (2013) postulated that implementing narrative as a writing genre helped learners to cognize their inner experience as well as empower their voices.

Similar to Lapidus et, al (2013), Park (2013a) explored her own poetic-autobiography rendition as a teacher-scholar in relation to racial, linguistics, gendered, classed, and professional identity politics, asserting narrative as a means for identity construction. Also, in an inquiry into humanizing teacher scholarship, the researcher illustrated the need for sharing insights and details about teachers' lived experiences in a hope to "raise our [teachers'] awareness of and consciousness about what it means to do advocacy work around issues of (dis)enfranchisement that we teachers face, especially the visible minority women faculty in higher education" (p. 15).

Research also demonstrated the validity of narrative writing as a tool of empowerment (Lapidus et al., 2013; Liu, 2008; Park, 2013a; Park, 2013b). In her narrative, Liu (2008), a Taiwanese ESL educator, illuminated the transformation of her identity as an L2 user. Her manuscript depicts a journey of how her perception has been reconstructed: from a person who lost the sense of who she was while trying to adapt to L2 culture to a person who is empowered as a multilingual and competent language user. Park (2013b) also demonstrated that upon completing an autobiographical writing project, ESL learners had changed their attitude towards English writing, feeling confident, comfortable, and secure about writing in English, which advocates self-assessment as legitimate language users.

Moreover, some empirical studies highlighted the significance of using narrative writing projects as a way to enhance ESL/EFL students' personal, linguistic, and cultural development (Chamcharastri, 2013; Loureiro-Rodriguez, 2013; Park, 2013b). For

example, Chamcharastri's (2013) qualitative study examined four Thai college students' fear-expressing narratives in both Thai and English in order to gain insights into their perceptions of narrative writing experiences in both languages. By analyzing participants' narratives and responses to the interview questions, Chamcharastri (2013) concluded that emotive narrative writing is beneficial to enable learners to reflect on their personal experiences and to enhance their linguistic and cultural understanding of L1 and L2. In addition, learning to express emotions in writing is a meaningful and engaging personal act.

Accordingly, narrative writing is deemed meaningful because it "presents a subjective reworking of the individual's biographical concept and thus allows the researcher an insight into the hidden conceptual and emotional world of the individual" (Hanauer, 2003, p. 78). By exposing ESL female teacher trainees to a narrative writing task in the current study, the participants might have a better understanding of the meaningful writing event and its contributions to L2 literacy.

### **Poetry Writing**

The purpose of the current study is to raise awareness of the L2 meaningful literacy and writing. Based on empirical evidence (Hanauer, 2003, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011; Garvin, 2013; Tin, 2010), poetry is considered to be a potential writing genre that creates meaningful writing experiences in ESL/EFL contexts.

There is no one agreed upon definition for poetry. Bolton (1999), for example, defines poetry as "an exploration of the deepest and the most intimate experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas: distilled, pared to succinctness, and made music to the ear by lyricism" (p. 118). According to Hanauer (2004), poetry is defined as "a literary text that

presents the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the writer through a self-referential use of language that creates for the reader and writer a new understanding of the experience, thought, or feeling expressed in the text” (p. 10). Furthermore, Hanauer (2003) delineated the meaningfulness of poetry writing as “a discourse constructed around the epistemological principle of the unique that provides its readers with specific insights into individualized, personal human experience and linguistic expression” (p. 69). Therefore, poetry is perceived as a writing genre that involves linguistic knowledge, emotional expressions, cultural awareness, and deep understanding of one’s experience. Most importantly, poetry writing is a process of legitimizing an individual’s unique life.

Hanauer (in press) explicated four reasons why poetry should be integrated in L2 writing instruction. First, poetry writing undergoes the processes of self-reflection and self-discovery. Through the process of revising and writing poetry, L2 writers can have deep interactions with their personal experiences. Second, poetry writing is based on constructing new and creative relationships between form and meaning. Third, this writing genre allows emotional expression as well as it emphasizes the value of the individual’s history and lived experiences. Finally, poetry is culturally and socially perceived as a prestigious form of writing, and hence integrating it in L2 writing classrooms might enable writers to feel the significance of their writing. As such, poetry writing holds the potential of getting writers engaged in the writing process and enhancing self-expression.

Many teachers and students doubt that poetry writing can be implemented in ESL/EFL classrooms. Yet, Hanauer’s (2010) examination of the characteristics of second language poetry proved the opposite. As a part of a larger project that examined poetry as

a research methodology, Hanauer (2010) investigated the textual and literary characteristics of the corpus of 844 poems produced by 81 ESL poets over six years in College Writing classes, in relation to some analytical methods and objectives such as text size, lexical category, Lexical Frequency Profile, poetic features, lexical content, and expressed emotion. He indicated that an L2 poem is relatively a short text that includes simple high frequency words, as well as being characterized by the use of the first-person pronoun, figurative images and emotional words. As such, L2 poetry writing is seen as a process of description and reflection, in which poets express their personal experiences and emotions by exploring and then describing them in writing. Moreover, the fact that the poetry writing involves visual images, along with the simplicity and shortness of the text, supported the argument that poetry writing is not a difficult task to be implemented in ESL/EFL writing classrooms. Furthermore, Tin (2010) postulated that students' creativity in writing L2 poems could be promoted by giving them some constraints and regulations for writing poems, as in acrostics.

Researchers have recently extended the understanding of poetry writing as a research tool (Hanauer, 2010; Garvin, 2013; Park, 2013a). The understanding of poetry as a research method is based on the idea that “poetry writing is a process in which participants attempt to make sense of their own experiences and express them in a way that other readers may have an insight into their own subjective interpretation of personally meaningful events” (Hanauer, 2010, p. 31). Hanauer (2010) also emphasized the relationship between poetry and qualitative research, stating that “the written poem that manages to capture moments of life with the associated emotional and sensory feelings offers the qualitative researcher a rich source of information with which to

closely explore the writer's position and understanding" (p. 88). In other words, it is the process of self-discovery involved in writing poetry as well as the emotionally informed data that make poetry writing a potential tool for qualitative research.

Following Hanauer's (2010) assessment of poetry as a research methodology, Garvin (2013) implemented a writing project that employs poetry writing as a research method and writing pedagogy to raise EFL Chinese students' awareness of their cultural and social contexts. The project was conducted in four EFL research writing courses in a university in mainland China for over three months. The students composed over 200 poems about their own cultural understanding. By looking at students' writing and reflections at the end of the course, Garvin (2013) revealed that students' poems have "informed and personalized [their] personal understandings and cultural identity" and encouraged students to construct some local knowledge and create personal and cultural understanding of culture and history (p. 76). Therefore, poetry writing offers great potential as a research method. Also, students' poems have reflected their ability to overcome textual errors and use poetic devices, the thing that was enhanced by the expressive power of poetry. Based on this study, Garvin (2013) postulated a pedagogical project that uses poetry writing as a tool to empower an L2 writer's voice, develop L2 research writing skills, and provide a space for self-expression and identity negotiation. Such contextualized writing instruction that taps into students' L1 cultures and encourages L2 writers' identity construction targets the heart of utilizing writing as a meaningful experience.

Besides self-discovery and self-expression, poetry writing can enhance identity negotiation (Garvin, 2013; Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Park, 2013a), highlight cultural and

social awareness (Garvin, 2013, Hanauer, 2012; Park, 2013a), increase motivation and personal engagement (Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011, 2012, in press; Iida 2008, 2012), and empower L2 writers' sense of authority and voice (Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2012; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2012).

Therefore, the argument for meaningful literacy in ESL/EFL contexts is built on those personal, cultural, and linguistic benefits L2 writers may gain by incorporating spaces for self-discovery and reflection in the target language. Drawing on Hanauer's (2012) concept of meaningful literacy, writing in a second language should provide an opportunity to expand an individual's expressive abilities, and thus poetry writing seems to be an effective writing genre to fulfill this purpose.

Overall, interest in L2 poetry writing is not a new subject matter to explore, but how ESL/EFL writers understand the meaningfulness of this writing act has not yet been explored. So, by using poetry writing, this study intended to seek an understanding of six female ESL teacher trainees' perceptions and attitudes of meaningful literacy and whether they would apply meaningful writing instruction in their future context.

### **Final Remark**

As I explicated in the previous sections, there is a growing body of research that calls for addressing learners' individualities in language classrooms. Studies discussed in this review chapter have been mainly geared to the value of meaningful writing events as an appropriate research methodology and pedagogy to explore personal experiences, connect one's continuously changing identities, and reveal emotional lives. Moreover, research done on the effect of literary or creative writing has mostly focused on developing L2 literacy skills in general. Therefore, the current study intended to

understand the role of a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy in influencing ESL female learners/teachers' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing. It also intended to explore their evaluation of meaningful writing instruction as a pedagogical approach in their future teaching contexts.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The main objectives of this study were to examine the influence of a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy on six ESL female teacher trainees' perceptions of L2 writing and to explore their pedagogical preferences. To achieve those objectives, the participants were assigned three writing tasks: essay writing, narrative writing, and poetry writing. The inquiry consisted of semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions conducted immediately after each task to enable participants to express their perspectives.

This chapter presents the research questions that guided the study, explains the research design, and provides a detailed description of the participants and the sample selection. It also reviews the procedures for data collection and data analysis. Finally, it outlines the trustworthiness of the current study.

#### **Research Questions**

The principal goal for conducting this study is to expand thinking on meaningful literacy as a way of creating humanized language learning. It intended to raise ESL/EFL teachers' awareness to consider meaningful literacy instruction as an approach for teaching L2 writing. It focuses on six ESL female students who are currently enrolled in an MA TESOL program in the US. Building on Hanauer's (2012) conceptualization of meaningful literacy instruction, a significant research issue in this study is whether meaningful literacy practices, such as writing a personal essay, a personal narrative, and a poetry, influence ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing, and if so what are their perspectives towards implementing meaningful literacy

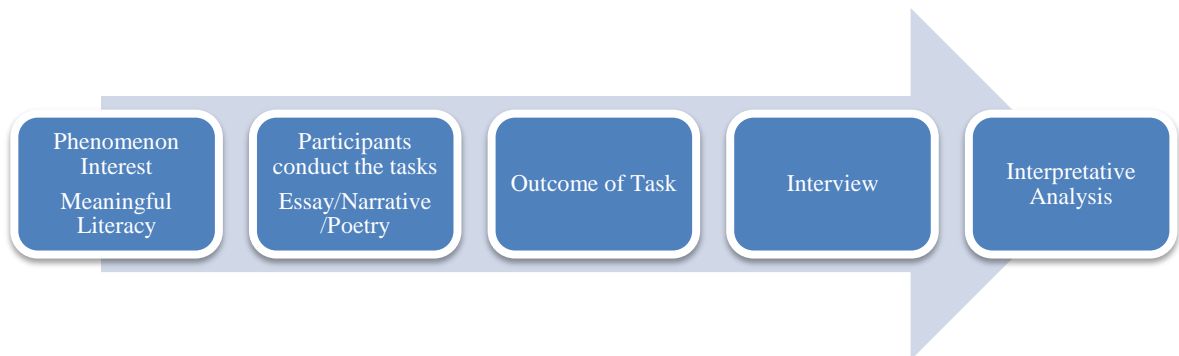
approach in ESL/EFL classrooms? To achieve this goal, the current study employed a task-based approach along with interviews to add qualitative data to participants' actual performance in the writing tasks. For this study, the research questions are set up as follows:

1. Does a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy influence ESL female teacher trainees' understanding and attitudes towards L2 writing?
2. If so, what are their perspectives towards implementing this approach in teaching writing?

### **Research Design**

This study was conducted as a task-based qualitative research design by using interview as a second method for data collection (see Figure 1). For Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the goal of qualitative investigations is to “better understand human behavior and experience . . . [to] grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meaning[s] are” (p. 38). Similarly, Merriem (2009) indicated that qualitative research aims to explore “the meaning people have constructed, that is how people make sense of their world and the experience they have in the world” (p. 13). In more succinct terms, the purpose of qualitative methods can be to gain deep understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriem, 2009), to explore participants' perspectives (Maxwell, 1996; Perry, 2005), and to “look at the real world before making claims about it” (Van Peer, Hakemulder, & Zyngier, 2012, p. 54). Furthermore, according to Marshall and Rossman (2010), “because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptions are involved, the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspective

that can be captured through face-to-face interactions” (p. 91). Additionally, as a part of the methodological framework for this study, tasks were employed as a ‘workplan’ that involves language input and guiding instructions to the expected outcome (Ellis, 2000, p. 195). In other words, by using a task-based qualitative research design accompanied by interview, this study aimed to “uncover information from information-rich samples” (Perry, 2005, p. 75), based on “a real-world processes of language use” (Ellis, 2003, p. 10). In order to investigate the questions of this study that explore participants’ perceptions and evaluations of meaningful literacy practices, a qualitative task-based study helped the researcher to have more in-depth understanding of each participant’s perspective drawn from her real experience.



*Figure 1. Methodological procedures*

### **Participants**

The researcher employed a variety of criteria for the sampling strategy because it is “useful for quality assurance” (Creswell, 2012, p. 158). Thus, this study purposely targeted six female ESL teacher trainees, who are currently enrolled in an MA TESOL program in a university located in Western Pennsylvania. The rationale for choosing this particular population is that they are future teachers, so their reported experiences of meaningful literacy might change their perceptions and hence affect other teachers’

perceptions of L2 writing and language learning in general. Besides, being prospective teachers, it is worth knowing their assessment of meaningful literacy instruction as effective pedagogy in their future teaching contexts. Furthermore, in similar line with feminist research, limiting the study to the female ESL teachers was to challenge “the legitimacy of research that does not empower oppressed and otherwise invisible groups—women” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 35).

However, having this small size of population is intended to allow the researcher to have rich and manageable data, knowing that in qualitative research, “the emphasis is always on the quality of the information taken from the sample, not the quantity” (Perry, 2005, p. 57).

### **Sample Recruitment**

I followed different recruitment strategies. First, I explained the purpose and the protocol of the study to the ESL female colleagues in my cohort and requested their participation, asserting that their withdrawal or refusal to take part in my study would not affect our relationship. A meeting time was set up and an informed consent form was obtained for those who agreed to participate in my study (see Appendix A).

Second, participants’ recruitment occurred in one of the first year MA TESOL classes, after receiving permission from the class instructor. I went to the class and requested participation from students in that class. In a short presentation, the central goal and the protocol of the study were explained to the participants (see Appendix B). Then, I distributed the informed consent forms to all female ESL students and explained that if they were willing to participate, they had to sign the statements, provide their contact information, and keep the extra copy. For those who chose not to participate, they could

simply drop the unsigned form on the teacher's desk. Upon students' approval to contribute to the study, I contacted them via their contact information, a meeting was set up, and the informed consent form was discussed again to remind the participants of the nature and the protocol of the study.

### **Data Collection**

This qualitative study intended to explore how six ESL female teacher trainees understand the meaningfulness of different writing tasks and how it might influence their attitudes towards L2 writing. It also aimed to investigate their perspectives on implementing meaningful literacy instruction in their future teaching contexts. This study was conducted as a consciousness raising exercise that included three personal writing tasks in three different genres—personal essay, narrative, and poetry—that might maximize the participants' chances to reflect and express themselves meaningfully. The process of data collection consisted of presenting the participants with three writing tasks and then conducting semi-structured interviews immediately after each task. The writing tasks were assigned mainly to get a very focused data so that the participants could reflect on their understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing based on their real experiences of meaningful literacy instruction. Also, the semi-structured interviews were used to give the researcher the flexibility to ask further questions about each participant's perception (Lichtman, 2010).

Each participant was trained individually for three separate sessions. In each session, the participants were assigned a writing task that was administered for approximately 40 minutes. Upon the completion of each task, the participants were immediately interviewed for approximately 20 minutes to explore their perceptions of

each writing task. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and they were conducted in English because it is the language of communication between the researcher and the participants. The digitally recorded interviews and the transcribed data were kept in an electronic document that was secured by a password with access limited to the researcher.

### **Task One: Essay Writing**

The first task was personal essay writing (see Appendix C). I presented the participants with a written prompt that asked them to write an essay about a challenging experience in their lives. Essay is a genre of writing that is widely used in ESL/EFL classrooms wherein accuracy is highly emphasized (Dai, 2010; Iida, 2008). So, including this writing genre in the current consciousness raising exercise was intended to give participants the chance to experience L2 writing from a different perspective based on noticing the potentiality for self-expression and self-discovery inherent in such type of writing instruction.

The following specific prompt will be used for this task:

*Think about a challenging experience you have had. Please write a one-to two-page essay about this experience. Make sure you provide relevant examples to support your ideas.*

I decided to have the participants write about “a challenging experience” in all three writing tasks, because the current research intended to focus on the meaningful moments that the participants could feel while using L2 literacy. Since the personal challenges are a part of the human life and might constitute personal meaningful experiences for the

participants, writing about these challenges might allow the participants to describe, reflect on, and gain some personal insights through L2 writing.

### **Task Two: Narrative Writing**

The second task was narrative writing (see Appendix D). Recent studies highlighted the significance of evocative writing genres as research method and pedagogy that tap into individual's history and lived experience (Chamchartsri, 2013; Lapidus et al., 2013; Park, 2013a, 2013b). In those studies, narrative writing is considered as a tool that enhances writers' perceptions of themselves, the world, and the transformation of emotions. Therefore, this study included a narrative writing task to maximize participants' experiences of meaningful writing event. I presented the participants with a written prompt that asked them to write a narrative about a challenging experience in their lives.

The following specific prompt will be used for this task:

*Think about a challenging experience you have had. Please write a one-to two-page narrative expressing this experience.*

### **Task Three: Poetry Writing**

The third task is poetry writing (see Appendix E). Poetry is considered as a critical, creative, and contextualized genre that allows ESL/EFL learners to cognize their sociocultural backgrounds and to explore their multiple identities through the process of writing a poem (Gravin, 2013; Hanauer, 2010, 2011, 2012). Accordingly, poetry writing was integrated in this study to give the participants the chance to be personally, emotionally, and cognitively engaged in the process of poetry writing while looking for linguistic expression that best capture their innermost thoughts and feelings. Thus, I

presented the participants with a written prompt that asked them to write a poem about a challenging experience in their lives.

The following specific prompt will be used for this task:

*Think about a challenging experience you have had. Please write a poem expressing this experience. The poem can be as simple as describing a single image. Your poem does not have to rhyme. Try to capture a moment.*

### **Interview**

Upon participants' completion of each writing task, I conducted an interview to explore their understandings and perceptions on the different writing experiences. The interview questions consisted of two sections (see Appendix F). The first section of questions was conducted after each writing task, and it intended to investigate each participant's understanding and attitude towards the meaningfulness of each writing task. The other section was conducted after completing all three tasks to explore the participants' opinions on the valuable pedagogical practices for teaching L2 writing based on experiencing and juxtaposing the different meaningful literacy practices and genres. A semi-structured interview was conducted, guided by the following questions:

#### **Section One: Understanding of the task**

1. Think about the task you just did. Was this a meaningful task for you?
2. Why or why not?
3. In what ways do you think this writing task contributed to your ability to write in English?



## **Section Two: Implications for teaching**

4. Think about all three writing tasks. Which one of these tasks would you use for teaching and why?
5. What elements do you like/ dislike about each writing task?

For the first question, it was designed to trigger the participants to think of the given task in relation to their understandings of its meaningfulness—the potentiality for self-representation and self-discovery—so that it would warm up the conversation, give the interviewees a sense of what the conversation would be about, and encourage them to share their opinions as in the second question. The second question asked the participants to explain more about their responses to the first question, so that I could have an insight into participants' understandings of what makes L2 writing a meaningful act. The third question encouraged the participants to think about how each task might influence their writing ability as such I could have deep understanding of the participants' attitudes towards L2 writing.

To expand thinking on meaningful literacy as pedagogical approach for teaching L2 writing and humanizing the language learning experience, I introduced the second section of the questions after the participants completed the three writing tasks. This section aimed to provide an overall view of participants' perceptions of using meaningful literacy for teaching writing based on experiencing different meaningful literacy genres. The first question in this section encouraged the participants to share their opinions of the effective pedagogical practice for teaching L2 writing drawn upon their experience; it also encouraged them to provide their justifications for their teaching decisions. As for the last question, it intended to unveil what elements participants like or dislike about

each writing task to have an insight into what aspects should be involved to promote meaningful literacy pedagogy for teaching L2 writing.

### **Data Analysis**

Even though two tools were administered to collect data—three writing tasks and interviews—the main data for this study was driven from analyzing the participants’ responses to the interviews. Following the data collection, I transcribed the verbal data into written texts and assigned the participants a pseudonym. Data analysis, according to Merriam (2009), is the process of making sense out of the data that “involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read- it is the process of making meaning” (pp. 175-176). Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) reported that “all research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (p. 19). In the current research, I analyzed the data through interpretive analysis in order to shape how the participants perceive their meaningful writing experiences. Interpretive analysis refers to the method of analyzing the data that focuses on interpretation. In this sense, interpretation is defined as follows:

It is about making sense of social situations by generating explanations for what’s going on within them. It is about making inferences, developing insights, attaching significance, refining understanding, drawing conclusions, and extrapolating lessons. (Hatch, 2002, p. 180)

To link interpretation to the data, I read each participant’s response to have a sense of the whole and kept notes on the types of attitudes and understandings provided by each participant in the interviews. Then, I carefully read each participant’s responses

evaluated my interpretations, and developed a detailed individual analysis of each case taking into account the main inquiries of this study. Later, I reread the data looking for salient interpretations. Finally, I developed a group analysis across all the participants to represent an overall picture of the findings. At this stage, general themes were constructed to summarize the research findings (Creswell, 2009). In the interpretation process, I provided my reflections along with excerpts from the participants' responses because as a researcher, "you have the responsibility to interpret your data and present evidence so that others can decide to what extent your interpretation is believable" (Lichman, 2006, p. 55).

### **Research Trustworthiness**

In the qualitative worldview, data trustworthiness, whether it is collected from interviews, focus groups, or observations is evaluated by the following criteria: transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For Merriam (2009), the research results are trustworthy when the concepts of validity and reliability are approached whether in data collection, data analysis, interpretation, or result presentation. These two notions refer to the assessment of the consistency of the research findings and the construction of reality. In order to ensure the validity of the current research, I asked two trusted colleagues who are familiar with my research to independently read a third of the original scripts and then read the interpretation for the purpose of examination and review, a strategy known as peer examination (Merriam, 2009). This strategy was applied to evaluate the consistency, in that the reconstructions reflect the reality of the collected data. At this stage, there was a high level of agreement

between my analysis and the other two reviewers, which is crucial to enhance the validity of this qualitative research.

The reliability or dependability was obtained by providing a rich description of the assumptions and theory behind the study and a thick documentation of the details provided in each process for conducting this study, including the sampling strategies and sample depiction (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Newton Suter, 2012).

### **Final Remarks**

In order to investigate the role of a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy in influencing six female trainee L2 teachers' perceptions towards L2 writing and in affecting their decisions for teaching L2 writing in ESL/EFL contexts, I used a qualitative task-based design and a semi-structured interview to collect data. The study was conducted as a brief consciousness raising exercise that included three separate and individual sessions, in which each participant had a writing task in a meaningful literacy genre followed immediately by an interview. The participants were purposefully selected to provide rich data from the perspectives of both ESL learners and prospective teachers. The trustworthiness of this research results was examined by measuring the internal consistency of the findings with the reality. Chapter four will report the findings of this study by presenting the analysis of each participant's reflection on this meaningful literacy consciousness raising exercise, and a group analysis that encompasses all the participants' perspectives to provide a broader vision of the contributions of this brief consciousness raising exercise.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This study examined the role of a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy practices in influencing six ESL female learners'/teachers' attitudes towards L2 writing. It also explored their evaluations of meaningful literacy instruction as a pedagogical approach for teaching writing in ESL/EFL contexts. This chapter reports on the findings of this study, derived from the data collected through semi-structured interviews. It consists of two sections according to the two types of data analysis. The first section provides a thorough analysis of each participant's understanding of L2 writing reflecting on her writing experiences in this consciousness raising exercise. It also details the participants' recommendations for teaching L2 writing. The second section discusses the ensuing results of the group analysis across all the participants in relation to the main inquiries of the current studies, to provide a complete picture of the outcome of this consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy. Participants' privacy is protected through the use of pseudonyms.

#### **Tina's Reflection**

"I can tell why my life is going in this way . . . because what I am writing is the decision I made in my (.)<sup>1</sup> upon my graduation." (personal communication, December 11, 2013)

Through writing about her past experience, Tina progressed from a generalized comment about the fast-paced nature of life to a sense of calmness. In her interview, Tina

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<sup>1</sup> (.) A dot in parentheses indicates a "micropause," usually less than 0.2 seconds (Jefferson, 1984).

reported how this writing task helped her focus on her social presence in the world as she encountered challenges and was able to overcome them. She reported:

Yeah, you feel before you [are] writing you don't think of it. . . . I think the speed of life is so fast and especially this kind of writing makes me feel calm down and think about my past experiences and my life journey. (personal communication, December 11, 2013)

In short, Tina relaxed because her scope of focus was appropriately proportional to a social contextualization that she could humanly analyze without feeling overwhelmed. By using a journey metaphor, Tina manifested this writing task as a reflective process that leads to a deep understanding of her presence in life and her life history as it is full of challenges. For Tina, this experience was truly meaningful because she used L2 writing to evaluate her past experiences and gain some personal insight. Tina also enacted L2 writing as an empowering resource through which she was able to unfold her past experiences and gain self-confidence. She reported that sometimes she felt “so depressed and so discouraged by some difficulties in life,” but when she wrote about her past experiences, she felt “more confident” and “more positive about life” as she realized that “now the difficulties is not something I can't overcome.” This realization presents Tina's process of becoming aware of the effect of using L2 literacy as a meaningful exercise.

When Tina was asked about the contribution of this type of writing instruction to L2 writing, she reflected her understanding of personal essay writing as a cognitively and personally engaging act, which involves a movement towards personal understanding and reflection. She indicated that since this type of writing instruction is related to her own experience, it is helpful because she “always ha[s] something to say.” Tina also

pinpointed that using her life experiences as the source for language use might improve her cognitive skills in terms of generating ideas and thinking how to organize them, as well as it might encourage “thoughts provoking questions about my life.”

For the personal narrative, Tina reflected on the meaningfulness of this task by showing a deep understanding of her life experiences. In the interview, Tina described her challenging experience as a “transitional period” in her life, and writing about that made her recognize how her past decisions affected her life now. Additionally, it allowed her not only to grasp the meaning of her personal challenges, but also to reflect on her future by stating that:

When I record my past experience, I find every detail (.) decision can change your life, ah that is why I think this-this important to me, so I feel I need to be careful in the future . . . when I make a decision . . . I need to keep my promise, and I need to really try my best. (personal communication, December 11, 2013)

In addition, Tina came to embrace L2 writing as a platform to construct and reconstruct her life experiences. By doing so, Tina used L2 writing as an empowering resource to negotiate her identity and manifest her presence in life as a socially contextualized individual with valuable life experience. This was evident through Tina’s experience of social expectation as she narrated about her decision to come to study in the US, wishing her parents would support her decision of going to study abroad. Interestingly, when she talked about her current feelings while studying abroad, Tina stated, “it makes me feel I am a whole person; I had a variety of experiences in the past and writing about that experiences helped me [feel] confident and I am not regretful for the past.” From her reflection, it can be implied that before she came to the US, there was

something missing in her self-perception; but now after engaging in this writing task, Tina felt complete.

When Tina was asked about the contribution of personal narrative to L2 writing, she portrayed writing in this genre as an engaging act; she indicated that it triggered her desire to express herself personally and emotionally in writing because it referred to her own experiences, and it was “emotionally related” to herself. For her, this type of writing act can be motivational because she really knows about “this life, my-my personal life.” Additionally, Tina pointed out the simplicity of this type of writing in terms of lexicon and syntax since she was describing her personal story, so she knew how to write about it. Also, Tina felt excited to share her story through narrative because she felt that “oh! Somebody really cares about my life . . . [and] feeling.” Through this perception of the audience, Tina constructed a view of L2 writing as a socially situated act through which she could express her innermost thoughts and feelings to a larger community of language users.

For the third task, Tina explicated that writing a poem about one of her challenging experiences enabled her to reflect on and remember her past positions, as well as it activated a set of emotions including happiness, anxiety, and excitement. In her interview, Tina reported, “when I experienced that moment, I don’t know whether (.) what is going to happen, so I feel nervous; and then I feel it is better than I thought about, so I feel excited . . . also I’m full of expectation for future.”

Reflecting on the value of poetry writing to L2 writing, Tina showed her understanding of L2 poetry writing as an embodied act, which involves personal, emotional, and cognitive insights. She discussed the potentiality of poetry writing to



improve her composition and cognitive skills, which resulted from the process of looking for specific vocabularies that express her “deep-deep feelings.” Tina also reported that poetry writing is easy and simple because it does not require specific writing skills, but at the same time, it might be confusing because she did not know whether the image she described was adequately presented within the format of this specific genre.

For pedagogical implementation, Tina supported the use of narrative writing in her writing class because “every student has a story to tell.” Tina’s understanding was based on the fact that learners will use their life experiences as the source of the knowledge, so it is a good thing to start with. It is clearly evident that Tina perceived L2 narrative writing as a means for self-expression that taps into one’s personal life history as the context for language use. She also discussed the practicality of implementing this writing genre to all levels of learners, as it requires “the most basic writing skills”. Tina explained that if learners “know how to write a sentence, how to introduce themselves, how to describe what is going on, how to use present tense . . . or past tense,” they can write a narrative. For teaching essay writing, Tina reported that it is easier because it has a clear structure and pattern, and using one’s life experiences as the context for language use would enhance learners’ composition and cognitive skills. However, Tina preferred to use poetry with more advanced learners because it does not follow a specific grammatical pattern that makes it difficult for beginners to understand or follow. Tina concluded her response by this statement: “no matter what language I teach, I would use narrative for sure. For other writing styles, I’ll (.) it depends—depends on the level of the students.”

## **Case Summary**

To summarize, Tina's understanding was to relive her past experiences through using L2 writing. She demonstrated her perception of the potentiality to use a literacy act, L2 writing in particular, as a reflective process and a meaningful resource to negotiate her identity and to reveal her personal and emotional expression. Tina also indicated the value of this consciousness raising exercise to validate her lived experiences as a rich source for language use which is a necessary step to overcome the absence of L2 learners' ownership in a new language.

### **Jasmine's Reflection**

"Of course I'll write more about my life, but in the real life, who cares about my life?"  
(personal communication, December 13, 2013)

For the personal essay writing, Jasmine described the meaningfulness of this task as a release of her negative emotions and attitudes. She reported that if she is so angry about something, she could write and think about everything since "it helps sometimes" to write it down and tear it up, so that "no one will get hurt." This was a truly meaningful experience, in which Jasmine embraced L2 writing as a healing process to revisit her bad experiences and to express her inner painful feelings. However, this act of releasing could explain Jasmine's perception that this type of writing was "not easy" for her. Besides her unfamiliarity with such a writing style since it is "narrative in the first place," Jasmine found this writing experience "painful." It is possible that the distressing life events demand Jasmine's reflection and expression of her "painful" and "bad" experiences. However, as a learner, Jasmine felt uncomfortable to share her life experiences with a teacher who might not have an interest to know about her life.

When Jasmine was asked about the contribution of personal essay writing to L2 writing abilities, she reflected that implementing this type of writing more often could not guarantee good academic writing. Though, Jasmine showed her perception of this type of writing instruction as an engaging process that facilitates meaningful expression and promotes self-awareness. She indicated that, with the training, this type of writing might help her to write more extensively since it is about her life, and it might help her to see herself “improving.”

For narrative writing, Jasmine described the meaningfulness of this task: “it has connection to my life; it is not about abstract ideas.” It was evident that writing a narrative about her personal experience made Jasmine deeply understand and appreciate her life history. Reflecting on her challenging experience, Jasmine proudly stated, “if I decided to stop [perusing her Bachelor], I wouldn’t be here. So it is meaningful.” She also reported that writing about her personal experience helped her recognize her previous achievements that she might forget when dealing with other everyday difficulties. As such, Jasmine explicated her perception of this writing experience as “kind of rewarding.” For her, L2 narrative writing is perceived as a powerful resource to legitimize her life achievements and enhance self-awareness. Moreover, L2 writing is seen as a form of therapy since this type of writing would make her “feel better.” Basically, Jasmine referred to narrative as a genre that she uses “just to myself to express how bad I feel.”

When Jasmine was asked about her perception of the narrative writing experience, she reflected that narrative “wasn’t that bad, but for essay, it is easier for me.” This was caused by her unfamiliarity with the structure of the narrative and by her image of

narrative authors as “really talented [writers] that you feel you’re living with them the same story. I’m not that kind of writ[er] unfortunately.”

Reflecting on the contribution of narrative writing to L2 writing, Jasmine stated that this type of writing instruction could be a good practice like “keeping journals.” She believes that practicing narrative writing would promote lexical awareness, and enhance composition and cognitive skills because she would “be more accustomed to this writing . . . like instead of spending about 10 minutes just to think about one idea, I could like generate more ideas.” However, for her, writing a narrative in class would be dependent on the positive feedback she might get from the teacher or her peers. She also stated that if this writing task is for a teacher, “I’m not sure if I [am] going to be very honest in it.” While Jasmine showed her lack of comfort in unveiling her life experiences in class, she implied her understanding of narrative writing as a genre that endorses personal expression and reflection; she stated “I’d rather to write for myself, think of a solution for myself, and then throw the paper away and that’s it.”

For poetry writing, Jasmine reflected the meaningfulness of this experience by showing her understanding of the transformation resulting from her developing life history. In this sense, Jasmine embraced L2 writing as a platform to unfold her life history. Through this unfolding, she was able to understand the continuous changes of her life and gain some personal insight. She stated that “it was nice, yeah, I remembered how it was hard at the beginning, how everything was hard at the beginning, and then how at the end I could achieve something good, how I am satisfied with it now.” This sense of satisfaction made Jasmine’s writing experience a powerful one, in which she used a new resource, the ESL poem, to explore her past experiences and understand her current

position. In addition, Jasmine perceived this writing task as a meaningful resource to reconstruct her past experiences, which in turn, promoted a sense of accomplishment. She explicated, “we like keep beating ourselves that we still have a lot of things to do. But writing about that and writing an end to what I’m struggling [with] . . . [made me find] that I achieved something.” This suggests that writing about her past achievements offered Jasmine the power in L2 to legitimize her past experiences and promote her self-perception that she is an individual with a rich life history. Hence, she reflected her positive attitudes towards this writing experience that it was “nice” and “good.”

Jasmine expressed her perception of poetry writing as an easy task because she deeply understood what she was writing about, employing her life experience as the context of language use. Though, Jasmine explained that poetry writing could be hard because it might bring unwanted memories to one’s consciousness. This implies Jasmine’s understanding of poetry writing as a personally engaging process that involves a reconstruction of the lived experiences and feelings. When Jasmine was asked about the contribution of poetry writing to L2 writing, she stated, “I don’t think it is a good idea.” Jasmine’s response was clearly influenced by her understanding of poetry that it has “its rhyme. . . . its own structure” and that poets should be able to make readers live the moment while she believes that she is not “good enough” to write a poem.

For her future teaching, Jasmine reported that she would use the personal essay. This decision was based on her teaching practical knowledge that “as teachers, we usually like, we usually tend to force our students like to do things that we believe in more . . . to do something and things that worked for you.” She explained that implementing personal essays in her writing class would be helpful in terms of its

applicability to other genres of writing, claiming that writing essays is basically what learners need to practice. She stated, “it’ll help them [learners] to write another . . . different forms of essays; and that what I think they really need.” Additionally, she reflected her understanding of this type of writing instruction as a method to understand one’s self. She argued that a personal essay is a good way to “think about all the things you know about yourself and things you achieved in your life, so my best one, I think is the personal essay.”

For narrative writing, Jasmine reflected her own perception that “narrative itself was not that easy for me . . . there is an image that narrative is about bad things or sad things usually.” So, she might use it as a part of her teaching, but she would not “force the students to do it.” When Jasmine was asked about her objectives to implement narrative writing in her teaching context, she confirmed the value of narrative writing to enhance learners’ self-awareness. She indicated that using narrative could help learners to “find a time also to know more or think about things they have done or things that they want to do in the future. So, writing it down, I think, is more like, yeah, to [help them] think deeply about their lives.” For poetry writing, Jasmine demonstrated that she is not familiar with poetry, and she believes that it “is a gift like not everyone can do it.” As such, she expressed her rejection of using poetry in her class by affirming “I’d never use it.”

### **Case Summary**

For this meaningful literacy consciousness raising exercise, Jasmine embraced L2 writing as a platform through which she was able to unfold her life history and explore her internal world. She reflected her perception of L2 writing as a meaningful resource

for personal and emotional expression and a healing process. However, she expressed this type of writing instruction as “painful” since it pulled up the painful events and feelings she had experienced before. This could explain the difficulties that she had in writing about her innermost thoughts and feelings during this consciousness raising exercise.

### **Yang Li’s Reflection**

“If you don’t even ask me to think about a challenging experience I ever had, I wouldn’t even think about it. Life just goes on.” (personal communication, December 17, 2013)

For Yang Li, this type of writing instruction is meaningful because it made her think of her past experiences and record her memories; otherwise she “wouldn’t even think about it.” For her, L2 writing could be used as a platform to unfold her innermost thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. By doing so, Yang Li presented a complex picture of her socialization in the community through L2 writing.

In this task, Yang Li wrote about a challenging experience of being married to a man of a different ethnicity than her own, recounted her social role, and explained how they both experienced outside of their marriage instances of racism from both their families and communities. Upon reflecting on her past experiences, Yang Li stated, “at that time things happened I was angry, but as the time passed, there was nothing, just the time passed.” This writing task helped her reflect on and evaluate her past experiences and delicate positions of social contextualization across different communities and ethnicities. After taking time to heal, and as she was reflecting on her writing, she stated that if she wouldn’t have written this personal essay, she would not have even thought about this process of healing and the time that was necessary for her to come to this realization and share personal insights.

As such, Yang Li perceived L2 personal essay writing as a reflective process that led her to reveal her innermost thoughts and beliefs as well as gain personal emotional insights. Additionally, she reported that this type of personal writing is much better than any other form of composition. On this matter, she demonstrated that this task was easier and interesting because it relied on her personal experiences as the context for language use, as if she “played a short movie in my brain to see what really happened.” In this sense, Yang Li reflected that she did not “need to think too much on how to organize it” because “this is the true thing.” This indicates Yang Li’s perception of L2 writing as an engaging and meaningful event that represented her lived experiences and in which the written language was directed by her expressive needs.

For narrative writing, Yang Li expressed her confusion in differentiating between the structure of narrative and personal essay. However, she demonstrated that writing a narrative allowed her to reveal her life history and to express her personal perspectives in detail. In fact, Yang Li employed L2 narrative writing as a situated social and political act in which she voiced her experience of being ostracized by marrying a man from a different ethnicity. In this narrative, she chose to write about the same topic, and explained that “I didn’t talk to my friends because they were like they couldn’t understand it. So I just carry my own part and did not think about it; but now all of memories start coming back and now I remember that thing.” This was definitely a meaningful moment, in which Yang Li used L2 writing as a platform to unveil her challenging moments, reconstruct her experiences, and negotiate her social presence in the world. Furthermore, Yang Li implied that this type of writing instruction allowed her to express her voice in the second language. Thus, this writing event could be also seen as



an empowering experience, enabling Yang Li to express herself and to construct her voice in L2.

Describing the value of narrative writing to L2 writing, Yang Li embraced L2 narrative writing as an engaging process that extends the use of L2 for personal expression. She reported that this writing task was not hard because she could write fluently. By using her reservoir of memories as the content for her writing, Yang Li explained that she was “just like telling the story . . . without a stop.” She also inferred that narrative writing helped her to write fast with no need to use “big-big words” since it was about her own life story. However, Yang Li discussed her concern for teaching this type of writing as a “free writing” without emphasizing the need to increase learners’ lexical awareness of using sophisticated or “big words.”

As for the third task, Yang Li showed a great passion towards writing a poem since it encouraged her to think of her past experiences and then express herself in a precise manner. She reported that while writing her poem, she was thinking about “what kind of words to use to make it [her poem] precise. . . . but also conveying all whatever you [she] mean”. Precision in this sense apparently refers to Yang Li’s understanding of poetry writing which, in turn, made her recognize the connection between her inner world that she wanted to express and the linguistic expressions that best captured her innermost thoughts.

When Yang Li was asked about the meaningfulness of her poetry writing act, she reflected her understanding of L2 writing as a meaningful resource for personal expression. She explicated that this writing genre allowed her to “completely express” what she meant. She also explicated that poetry writing is “not like a torture; there is

more fun” because it gives L2 learners the opportunity to “think about what kinds of words to pick and how to organize the form, and [it] doesn’t have to be long. . . . When they write, they have to think more how to write it.” She also described poetry writing as a creative act that allows L2 writers to do something different. As such, Yang Li showed her perception of poetry writing as an engaging process that allows L2 writers to extend their L2 use to convey their inner world and to be creative in using the language, a step that is necessary to enhance L2 writers’ authorship of the target language.

For her teaching context, Yang Li reported that she would implement all three genres but she prefers to focus more on poetry writing. She believes that essay and narrative writings are helpful to improve learners’ grammar because they would write well-structured sentences but writing poetry allows L2 learners to express themselves in a concise way besides being fun.

### **Case Summary**

For Yang Li, this consciousness raising exercise provided her an opportunity to think of her past experiences, record her memories, express herself, and reflect her social conceptualization through L2 writing. For the three writing experiences, she demonstrated L2 writing as an engaging process that is directed by her expressive needs. As such, Yang Li showed her perception of L2 writing as a meaningful resource to reconstruct her thoughts, held beliefs, emotions, and lived experiences. Such personal expression and reflection constitute a powerful experience in which Yang Li was able to use L2 to express her voice.

### **Teresa's Reflection**

“Writing is not difficult for me, I can write about everything, especially, when it comes to my life.” (personal communication, December 11, 2013)

When Teresa was asked to write about a challenging experience, she wrote about her decision to change her school when she was 13 years old. In her interview, Teresa implied that writing about her personal experience was meaningful because it enabled her to reflect on and appreciate her past positions. She stated, “that was me . . . [and] writing about that, I start realizing, yeah, that was something brave.” She also showed her understanding of L2 writing as a meaningful act to reconstruct her past experiences. She reported that for “such questions [that] ask what was most challenging or describing some challenging experience . . . nothing came to my mind immediately. I have to think, ok, what was challenging? Something I can explain and write.” By doing so, Teresa indicated the value of this type of writing instruction in enhancing a deep understanding of her life. This was a meaningful moment in which she gained personal insight as she uttered, “so yeah, I think luckily and fortunately I didn’t have any bad experience in my life like great challenges that I struggled through or so that’s why these things were pretty.”

When Teresa was asked to reflect on the contribution of this type of writing instruction to L2 writing, she indicated that if she had had this type of writing instruction from the early beginning of learning L2 writing, it “would have been the best thing to polish my skills.” This view was based on Teresa’s understanding that such writing instruction offers an interesting topic for writing, and it is easy regarding her familiarity with the content, its organization, and its word choices that best describe and express her

feelings. She explained that the topic “is close to me,” so this kind of writing is easier because it is like a story telling of her life. For her, when she has a chance to talk about her life, she will not have so much difficulty thinking about what to say, how to organize it, or whether the text is grammatically correct or not. This realization implies Teresa’s attitude towards this type of writing instruction. For her, writing in this genre is as an engaging act because it facilitates meaningful expression based on her own life experiences. Furthermore, Teresa reported the opportunity she had to extend her language use through a writing process that was directed by her expressive needs.

For narrative writing, Teresa evaluated narrative as a genre that allowed her to express herself subjectively and emotionally. However, Teresa reported that it is a little bit confusing to differentiate between a narrative and personal essay. She described the process of writing narrative as difficult because she was not used to this type of writing. Additionally, Teresa reported that narrative “is not for me,” but it is for “some readers . . . for a person who doesn’t know a tale of your life.” So for her, making her life story interesting to others is difficult because it requires creativity “to unite” all narrative conventions including “intrigue,” “plot,” and “climax” in the given time for that task. Although Teresa was aware of the conventions of this genre, she was not satisfied with her narrative because she did not think readers would find her narrative interesting. Nevertheless, Teresa reflected her understanding of L2 narrative writing as a social process of presenting her personal thoughts and emotions to a larger community of language users. She also mentioned that to produce a good narrative, she has to be in a condition that allows her to share her life with the audience, confirming the potential of this type of writing instruction, narrative writing in particular, to situate writing within a

social context for reflecting the writer's innermost thoughts, beliefs, and feelings to a larger group of people. By the end of the interview, Teresa demonstrated that this task has encouraged her to think about this genre and even practice writing in it.

For poetry writing, Teresa showed a resistant attitude towards the act of writing a poem, revealing that everyone has a way to explore him/herself, and poetry "is not mine; it is not my cup of tea as people say." She reported that her poem doesn't seem to be meaningful because she felt "constrained. . . . [that] I can't express myself 100% true (.) true to life in a poem." On this matter, Teresa demonstrated that she was looking for words that fit the lines and the rhyme of the poem, which did not really express her feelings. The focus on the poem's structure and format could explain the difficulties Teresa had in expressing herself and revealing her real emotions in a poem. Besides the poem's structure, Teresa's understanding of the poem as a set of complicated images made Teresa not satisfied with her poem since the images it described were "very plain, very simple." Nonetheless, she demonstrated that poetry writing could be a good way for personal and emotional expression for some people who are creative.

Reflecting on her perception of the contribution of poetry writing to L2 writing, Teresa indicated her understanding of this writing genre as a meaningful resource that extends language use to facilitate personal and emotional expression. She explicated that poetry is perfect to enhance L2 learners' creativity and to build their vocabulary repertoires, as they would be motivated to look for words that best express their feelings.

For her future teaching, Teresa pointed out that she would definitely use all three genres to give L2 learners the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. She stated:

They [learners] should be given an opportunity to try as many genres as possible because for example if poetry is not suitable for me it might be suitable for someone else; and maybe for some person it would be the best option to express his or her emotions and . . . to explore her or himself. (personal communication, December 16, 2013)

Teresa discussed her preferences for teaching writing in relation to the practicality of each genre. She reported that teaching the essay is easy because it has clear instruction, rules, and format. However, she reflected that she has to be careful explaining the narrative instruction, and showed concern about assessing poetry in the L2 classroom. She reported that writing a poem is so “subjective, so unique and creative. So I can’t (.) I can’t even recommend something. Just be yourself and write.” For her, it is difficult to evaluate writers’ feelings, and it might affect their motivation negatively. Moreover, Teresa implied that teaching poetry is contingent upon students’ advanced level of English proficiency, so “if they have some problems for example with English, like I mean low level of English proficiency, maybe I should start with just essays and then go to narratives and then go to poetry.”

### **Case Summary**

In this reflection, Teresa acknowledged that L2 writing could be used to produce meaningful expression since it is “connected” to her lived experiences. She believes that L2 writing could be easier when it is built on her personal life as the context for language use. She also implied the potentiality of using an L2 literacy practice to widen the understanding of her past experiences. Teresa embraced her personal essay and narrative writing experiences as a reflective process that promoted her self-understanding and

allowed subjective expression. However, she showed a resistant attitude towards poetry writing because she could not fully express herself in poetry.

### **Salma's Reflection**

“Finally, I talked more [about] my experience since nobody [had] asked me to write [about]. It asked me to talk about it, but to write it no way! So you have a chance to see what happened to me.” (personal communication, December 17, 2013)

Salma described the personal essay writing experience as “great” because it enabled her to unfold her life history, deeply understand her experiences, and reveal her emotions and negative attitudes. She showed that writing about her studying abroad experience made her reconstruct her past events and ultimately realize how “the negative side affected so great to bring my (.) the positive side . . . [and make me] independent;” so for her, it was “a great changing.” In this writing task, Salma employed L2 writing as a reflective act of realizing the continuous transformation of her developing life history resulting from changing the environment by studying in the US. As such, this writing act allowed Salma to recount her social contextualization and gain some personal insight. Additionally, she expressed her positive attitude towards this type of writing instruction as she was personally and emotionally involved in the writing. She explicated:

My head was full of ideas and I don't know which one should I start with because it is related too much . . . with my personality, and I want to express my feeling. So, when I started, . . . [I] automatically wrote it down . . . I didn't find myself to organize it, since I want just only write my experience towards (.) my feelings, . . . [and] my experience. (personal communication, December 17, 2013)

For her, L2 writing was an engaging process that was directed by her expressive needs.

Salma also referred to her writing act as “a release of my stress,” “releasing my bad attitude,” and “my releasing.” This was based on Salma’s perception of meaningful literacy instruction as a healing process to “release” her negative experiences. She demonstrated that if she does not have the chance to reveal her negative feelings, they will be “increased, increased, increased.” As a part of this personal healing, Salma reported:

It was so difficult emotion and personal (.) and I have no chance speaking with others about how it’s affected me, especially, to be afraid to communicate with others, and people [are] afraid of my appearance. So, nobody ask[ed] me about that in person. They may be afraid it touch[es] me negatively. So, I wanna someone to ask me like to express more. Right now you give me this chance. So, thank you! (personal communication, December 17, 2013)

In this sense, Salma found this writing act therapeutic, through which she was able to reveal her negative experiences. Furthermore, she employed writing as a situated social act “to release” an emotional and personal experience that was affected by her way of socializing in a new community while studying abroad and was affected by how other students perceived her. In her account, she shared how she would have liked to talk with someone, but was not able to because other students were intimidated or didn’t know how to approach her because of her conservative appearance as a veiled Muslim woman. This experience is particularly delicate, because it presents a first-account of the pressures a veiled Muslim woman can experience while studying abroad, which can challenge her emotional and personal well-being. Additionally, she showed that writing a personal essay in L2 allowed her to change her perception of L2 writing. For her, the



emotional responses are usually endorsed in L1 writing, and this task proved the ability to use L2 writing to facilitate emotional expression.

When Salma was asked about the contribution of this type of instruction to L2 writing, she discussed the opportunity she had to express her voice, unlike her previous writing experience where there was “no chance to write about our opinion.” She also discussed the lexical simplicity of this type of writing since she was basically talking about her thoughts and feelings. By utilizing the reservoir of memories as the context for language use, Salma reflected on the value of implementing meaningful literacy instruction to enhance voice expression in the new language. She emphasized that keeping this writing as a journal or a free writing would be “great” since it allows L2 learners to recognize their progression in terms of organizing ideas and enlarging their lexical competence. Additionally, Salma suggested that this type of writing might help L2 learners to get trained to L2 writing, and then to develop their agency and take control of their writing progression.

For the second task, Salma found the narrative writing experience meaningful since it allowed her to construct and reconstruct her real and imagined life, live the moment, and experience different kinds of feelings. Salma indicated that she changed some events in the story and chose another character in order to reflect what she “already went through”, to be someone else she wanted to be, and then to see “what will happen at the end.” She described her narrative writing as a journey that motivated her to write more to see what would happen at the end. In this sense, narrative writing could be seen as a form of self-exploration.

Salma also implied her understanding of L2 writing as an embodied act that endorses the expression of personal feelings. By writing about her future graduation scene, Salma described her narrative writing as a “kind of joy” that not only enabled her to recreate her previous experience and live her graduation dream, but also activated some emotional responses; as she reported, “from the beginning till the end, I found myself full of different kind of emotions” including “joy,” “happiness,” and “depression.” At the end, Salma indicated that this writing experience made her feel confident and gave her a “push forward,” that the scenario she wrote would happen to her one day and she would graduate and feel all of those joyful emotions.

Reflecting on the contribution of narrative writing to L2 writing, Salma implied its benefit as an engaging process that involves emotional information. She confessed that writing this task enhanced her use of emotive words that best express her feelings. She also reflected its effect on her L2 cognitive skills because she did not need to translate from L1 to L2; instead, she was naturally involved in the writing process, excited to discover what the ending of her story would be. Additionally, Salma discussed the role of this genre of writing to raise L2 writers’ self-esteem because “they accomplish something” creative through using L2. This sense of accomplishment is crucial to influence L2 writers’ perceptions of themselves as legitimate language users and writers.

As for the poetry writing, Salma indicated that writing about one of her personal experiences in a poem allowed her to express more about her emotions at that time. She explicated:

It is like a combination of fear and joy, that I’ll accomplish my ambitions but in the same time (.) I’m in the place that I have no idea what will happen! So, when I

wrote everything, it's like remembering . . . of what happened. (personal communication, December 19, 2013)

This was a definitely meaningful moment in which Salma used the L2 poem as a resource to construct her lived moment and reveal her inner emotions. Additionally, she demonstrated that she felt like an “artist” who has the ability to write something “different” and unique because she produced a piece of “finest art” in L2. This suggests that by writing a poem, Salma gained a sense of accomplishment and authority in L2 because she expressed her personal experience and unveiled her emotions in a prestigious way. For her writing task, Salma demonstrated that she tried to be “creative more” because she felt that for writing a poem:

It is a great skill not to present your experience by certain words but. . . [to] write it in indirect way . . . [thinking of] which simile, or metaphor, irony, or ambiguity . . . fits for the sentence. So, this kind of mental process (.) it's like jump[ing] . . . from beginning level to advance level . . . of using your L2. (personal communication, December 19, 2013)

She also reported that she felt joyful when choosing certain words for writing a poem because it is like “music”. Thus, it could be argued that Salma perceived L2 writing as an embodied act that facilitates literarily negotiated expressions of her personal experiences which entails emotional and cognitive involvement.

As a response to her perception of the contribution of poetry writing to L2 writing, Salma reported that poetry writing allows L2 writers to talk freely about any topic, including “love, jealous, anger, and attitude towards something.” She demonstrated that although poetry writing is not easy in terms of conveying implicit meaning, it is

helpful to promote creativity, to enhance cognitive skills during the process of choosing words, to build up the relationship between form and meaning, and to reveal a great deal in a concise pattern.

For her future teaching context, Salma reported that she would use the personal essay, narrative essay, and poetry to give her students a chance to reveal their emotions, understand their life experiences, and write freely in their L2. She also showed a great passion to use poetry in L2 writing classrooms, demonstrating that the ambiguity element in writing poetry would enhance L2 writers' creativity and allow them to talk about "sensitive" topics without hurting someone's feelings. It is also helpful to enhance L2 learners' self-esteem as they perceive themselves as "special writers" who can write a poem in L2. Salma also referred to poetry writing as a kind of "motivation" because it encourages L2 learners to be creative and to perceive themselves as special writers.

### **Case Summary**

For the three writing tasks, Salma reflected her perception of L2 writing as a meaningful resource to explore her internal world, experience the imagined world, and enhance her personal and emotional expression. Additionally, Salma reflected her understanding of L2 writing during this consciousness raising exercise as an engaging process that was controlled by her expressive needs. She also referred to meaningful literacy practice as a personal healing since it allowed her to reveal her painful emotions and express her social contextualization while studying abroad. Finally, Salma discussed the benefits of implementing literary and creative writing genres to enable L2 learners to perceive themselves as legitimate L2 users and writers.

### **Agnes's Reflection**

“Some feeling, some expression can't be written. So, you have to feel it. [It] can't be said in words even if you can speak 10 languages.” (personal communication, December 11, 2013)

At the beginning of the meaningful literacy consciousness raising exercise, Agnes reported that writing a personal essay was not meaningful. This was affected by her attitude towards the action of writing and her held beliefs about recording her memories in writing. She expressed her perception as follows:

It is a difficult task for me not a meaning[ful]. . . . Because I never like writing diary in my life. . . . Basically, I don't like writing this is the point. . . . This kind of writing is feel like kind of reminisce and remember[ing] what you did in the past and meanwhile I prefer to have like video or something. . . . I just need to remember that. (personal communication, December 11, 2013)

However, Agnes provided an alternative writing event that she found exceptionally meaningful in which she used three phrases in a second language other than English to express her emotions and gratitude for a friend by writing, “I love you. I'm sorry. Thank you”. Reflecting on that writing act, Agnes confidently stated, “if you combine the three words, phrases, it feels SOOO meaningful for me. . . . It is simple words but it means a lot to us.” Nevertheless, she argued that some emotions cannot be expressed in writing but they hold a stronger meaning through the action of feeling. As she stated, “even if [you] say the word ‘I love you’, I don't think the word ‘I love you’ will mean deeper if you write it, but if you feel it-it means more.” On this alternative

writing experience, Agnes indicated her perception of L2 writing as an embodied performance that endorsed her real emotions.

For the current personal essay task, Agnes reported that it was not meaningful for her because it made her “really think hard about what is challenging? . . . Why is it challenging?” while she believes that “when it is meaningful, it [the content of writing] just go[es] with the flow.” However, as Agnes was thinking hard about her past experiences, she showed some moments of self-reflection; she described her personality as a “kind of positive and optimistic person,” who views challenges as only a “next step.” Through reviewing her life history, this writing encouraged Agnes to think about her life, promoting some forms of self-understanding and self-reflection, indicating that she is an adaptive person who views challenges as a process of being in life.

When Agnes was asked about the contribution of this type of writing instruction to L2 writing, she demonstrated the benefits of writing a personal essay as a good daily practice for L2 writing. For her, it would enable L2 learners to freely write about their life experiences without worrying about grammatical or spelling mistakes. She also reflected that L2 writing would be easier because “it is about their [learners] life. . . . about what they have experienced. So, I don’t think they find difficulty in describing something (.) like story telling rather than if they’re asked to explain a topic they didn’t know.” In this sense, Agnes implied that the ease with which L2 learners would perform such L2 writing tasks results from the perception of this type of literacy instruction as a personal reflective process.

Again, for the narrative writing experience, Agnes implied that there is no reason to record her life experiences while she already remembers them. Although she reflected

that she does not like to write, she found “the content of writing is meaningful” because, as she stated, it “reminds me [of] the process I went through” that “I won’t be here if I didn’t pass that process.” For her, L2 writing was a meaningful resource to deeply explore and reflect on her past situations. She demonstrated that without the assistance of the stranger who helped her get ready for an upcoming interview, she could not obtain her dream of coming to the United States. This exploration has further prompted Agnes’s insightful response as she reported, “now, I start thinking of that person, I should call him.” Additionally, she confessed that even though she does not like recording her memories in writing, by writing about her life history, she was able to think deeply about her experiences and to put them “into details.”

Reflecting on the contribution of this type of literacy instruction to L2 writing, Agnes referred to narrative writing as an engaging process that utilizes the writer’s personal life as the context of language use and it is directed by the writer’s expressive needs. She explicated that “you feel attached to narrative” because it is about one’s own story. Furthermore, she indicated that narrative is helpful to improve L2 composition skills and linguistic skills, and to promote “the process of being a good writer.” In this sense, Agnes explained that narrative writing could encourage L2 writers to produce a grammatically clear and lexically coherent text in order to express their exact feelings and to make their stories look “real.” By the end of the interview, Agnes stated that “it’s kind of contradiction. I like the content. I mean the content I use is meaningful, but the process of writing, I mean the writing of what I should put what is meaningful into words, I don’t like it.” This refers to Agnes’s attitudes towards the actual process of writing, that even though what she wrote was meaningful for her, she did not like her

writing act. As such, her perception of the meaningfulness of this writing event was apparently affected by her not liking to write in general.

For poetry writing, in the beginning, Agnes reflected that writing a poem about her personal experience was not meaningful for her. This perception was affected by Agnes's confusion and dissatisfaction about her writing which resulted from her previous understanding of poetic structure. For her, poetry should contain metaphors and lofty, Shakespearean, complicated words. However, when Agnes was asked if the content of her poem was meaningful, she stated that she did not know "whether we should put it as meaningful," but this task "just reminds me about my experience."

It was obvious that Agnes was not quite sure about defining the meaningfulness of her writing tasks throughout the consciousness raising exercise. Yet, by the end of this exercise, she showed a meaningful moment in which she gained a sense of appreciation of her past by summarizing the outcomes of her three writing tasks; she stated, "I'll put it in this way: without passing that challenge, I won't be here." In this last session of the meaningful literacy exercise, Agnes started to recognize the implication of the meaningfulness of her three writing tasks by reporting that if L2 writing is employed to make her aware of something new and entails self-awareness, then all three tasks would be "SOOOO meaningful." After this reflection, Agnes was able to explain her understanding of the meaningfulness of her poetry writing task by realizing that through writing the poem, she acknowledged that "Agnes has experience this kind of feelings and then at that time you Agnes . . . like have doubt of yourself, but then you're kind of know how to overcome it, and then you overcome it." By doing so, Agnes showed her



understanding of this type of literacy instruction as a meaningful resource to gain personal and emotional insights.

Furthermore, she expressed her perception of the value of meaningful literacy instruction as “it gives a sense that English is your language.” She explicated that the process of personal expression, either by writing or speaking in a second language, further confirms one’s ownership of that language. As she stated, this type of personal writing is basically associated with “people’s first language as they have a wide range of vocabulary to express,” so “if I want to show. . . for myself [that] I’m an English speaker not an English second language speaker, I’ve to express all, not all, but express most of my writing, my speaking, my reading, and my listening into English.” This implies Agnes’s perception of L2 literacy practice as an empowering tool that offers L2 writers the opportunity to feel ownership in a new language through utilizing their life histories, experiences, and emotions as the context of language use.

Regarding the poetry task, Agnes shared her perspective on its contribution to L2 writing ability by discussing the process of poetry writing; she demonstrated that writing a poem would allow L2 writers to express themselves in a short text that is loaded with implicit meanings, since they would “try to capture” their experience “and then express it in really short way. But when you read it, it has a lot of meanings.” Also, she commented that integrating poetry writing into an L2 writing class would be helpful to promote genre awareness.

For her future teaching, Agnes pointed out that she would use narrative writing because “you make it;” this suggests Agnes’s understanding of the value of this genre to enhance L2 writers’ authorship of their writings since they perceive themselves as the

creators of the text. However, Agnes reflected that she does not like poetry because of her previous understanding of poetic structure and format.

### **Case Summary**

In this consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy, Agnes expressed a resistant attitude towards writing about her memories. Though, by the end of this brief consciousness raising exercise, Agnes reflected her understanding of the meaningfulness of her three writing tasks since they allowed her to gain some personal insight. Through writing about her life, she showed meaningful and powerful moments in which she came to a self-reflection that “oh yeah I past that, it means I did a good job and then maybe I did something wrong but it was good.” For Agnes, this consciousness raising exercise has changed her perception “about the importance of remembering your past in order to develop yourself.” However, she indicated that she still does not prefer to write about her life experience because, besides her not liking writing, she describes herself as an “introverted” person who doesn’t like to share her internal life with others.

### **A Concluding Analysis**

When six ESL female teacher trainees were asked to reflect on the meaningfulness of their writing tasks, their understandings were to reconstruct, explore, and reveal their past experiences and inner feelings. From the analysis of all data, one of the most predominant perceptions held by five participants among the six is that L2 writing is a personally and emotionally engaging and embodied experience. In a sense, the participants viewed their reservoir of memories as a source for expressing meaningful content in a literacy practice, in which the written language was directed by their expressive needs. This could explain the ease with which some of the five participants

performed the tasks in this consciousness raising exercise. Ironically, this could also explain the difficulties that two of the participants found while conducting the writing tasks. For example, Agnes indicated that writing about her challenging experience was difficult because she did not like recording memories, and that she had to think hard about a challenging experience in her life, while she perceives herself as an optimistic person who views challenges as a motivating factor. Whereas, Jasmine explicated that writing about her life experiences and memories was painful because it reminded her of unwanted, neglected, or forgotten memories.

Based on this consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy, the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards L2 writing are summarized in the table below that presents the emergent views in relation to each writing genre: personal essay, narrative, and poetry. As such, the check mark (✓) is used to show if the view appeared in each participant's response.

### **Personal Essay**

Upon writing an essay about a personal experience, the perception of L2 writing as a reflective process that leads to a deep understanding and appreciation of personal life was the dominant view that was expressed by the six participants. In addition, the perception of L2 writing as an embodied performance that endorses the expression of personal feelings, was another salient view held by four participants. On this matter, it is worth noticing that Tina and Agnes viewed L2 writing as an act that activated their personally lived emotions while Jasmine and Salma described their writing experiences as a part of personal healing to unveil their painful emotions.

Table 1

*Participants' Perceptions and Attitudes Towards L2 Writing*

<b>Reflection</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Tina</b>	<b>Jasmine</b>	<b>Yang Li</b>	<b>Teresa</b>	<b>Salma</b>	<b>Agnes</b>
<b>Perceptions</b>	<b>Personal Essay</b>						
	Reflective process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Embodied performance	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Healing process		✓			✓	
	Resource for personal insight	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Socially situated act	✓		✓		✓	
<b>Attitudes</b>	Positive	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Negative		✓				✓
<b>Perceptions</b>	<b>Narrative</b>						
	Empowering resource	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Social discourse	✓		✓	✓		
	Healing process		✓				
<b>Attitudes</b>	Positive	✓		✓		✓	
	Negative		✓		✓		✓
<b>Perceptions</b>	<b>Poetry</b>						
	Embodied performance	✓		✓		✓	✓
	Empowering resources			✓		✓	
	Resource for personal insight		✓				
<b>Attitudes</b>	Positive			✓		✓	
	Neutral	✓					✓
	Negative		✓		✓		

Furthermore, the view of L2 writing as a meaningful resource that leads to self-understanding was indicated by Tina, Jasmine, Teresa, and Salma. In addition, L2 writing in this specific genre was perceived as a situated social act that allowed Tina, Yang Li, and Salma to reveal their social understandings of themselves and the world they live in.

Since this type of literacy instruction is based on the participants' personal experiences, five of the participants reflected their attitudes towards essay writing as an engaging process, in which the written language was directed by the writer's expressive

needs. Nonetheless, there are two participants who showed their discomfort for writing in this genre. For Jasmine, this refers to her not liking to share her life experiences with others and to her lack of familiarity with this type of writing; while for Agnes this was resulted from her resistant attitude towards the act of writing itself and recording memories in writing.

Overall, writing in this genre was perceived as a meaningful practice that extends language use for personal expression and reflection.

### **Narrative Writing**

Writing a personal narrative was perceived as part of a process for deepening the ways in which the participants could understand, reflect, feel, and reveal their personally meaningful understandings to themselves or to others. Narrative writing in this consciousness raising exercise was enacted as a powerful or “rewarding” experience, as specifically described by Jasmine. This view was expressed by Tina, Jasmine, Yang Li, and Salma who pinpointed the potentiality narrative writing offers to negotiate one’s identity, to validate one’s life achievements, or to legitimize L2 authorship. For Jasmine, L2 writing was also perceived as a therapeutic process. In addition, L2 narrative writing was reflected as a form of social discourse for presenting personal experiences and feelings to other language users, a perception that was held by Tina, Yang Li, and Teresa.

Participants also showed different attitudes towards L2 narrative writing. Three of the participants—Tina, Yang Li, and Salma—demonstrated L2 narrative writing as an engaging act which involves personal, emotional, and cognitive insights. For them, writing in this genre was easy and simple because it was built on their own life stories. Some of those three also viewed narrative writing as motivational, to write in L2 because

it promotes personal expression and encourages the writer's creativity. The other three participants—Jasmine, Teresa, and Agnes—expressed their disfavor for this writing act. For Teresa and Jasmine, this was affected by their unfamiliarity with this type of writing, while for Agnes, it was influenced by her position on recording her memorable events.

Altogether, L2 narrative writing was employed as a platform to unveil the participants' innermost thoughts and feelings, which leads to personally meaningful expression.

### **Poetry Writing**

Based on this consciousness raising exercise, L2 poetry writing was perceived as a process that highlights the connection between one's inner world that she wanted to express and the linguistic expressions that best capture the innermost thoughts and feelings. This perception was expressed by Tina, Yang Li, Salma, and Agnes who viewed L2 writing as an embodied performance that extends language use to convey meaningful personal and emotional expressions. In addition, L2 poetry writing was viewed as an empowering tool that legitimizes L2 writers' authorship and ownership of the new language, a view that was indicated by Yang Li and Salma. Furthermore, L2 poetry writing was perceived as a way for widening the understanding of life experiences. This was mainly reflected by Jasmine who demonstrated that poetry writing made her understand the transformation resulting from her developing life history.

Some of the participants showed a positive attitude towards this meaningful literacy practice as an engaging, joyful, and simple creative act to reconstruct past events and feelings. However, one can notice that the participants' previous understandings of and unfamiliarity with poetry writing has negatively influenced their perceptions of this

writing genre. This was indicated by the confusion and dissatisfaction with poetry writing expressed by most of the participants.

In a sense, poetry writing was reflected as a meaningful process that enacts literary linguistic expression of personal experiences, and involves emotional and cognitive knowledge.

After presenting a group analysis of the participants' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing, the following section offers an overall analysis of the six ESL female teacher trainees' opinions on using meaningful literacy as a pedagogical approach. To summarize the findings, the table below presents each participant's perspectives regarding the use of each writing genre in her future teaching context. Those perspectives were discussed in relation to the degree of agreement or rejection that appeared differently while discussing the three writing genres.

In this table, "strongly agree" refers to the participants' willingness to employ this writing genre with showing passion or providing strong argument for its efficacy as pedagogy. "Agree to some extent" indicates the participants' tendencies to integrate the writing genre in teaching writing with adopting some modification as it is explained later in this chapter. "Reject" shows participants' refusal to consider the writing genre as a part of their teaching. Again, the check mark (✓) is used here to show if the view appeared in each participant's response.

Table 2  
*Participants' Recommendations on Using Meaningful Literacy as a Pedagogical Approach*

Genre	Tina	Jasmine	Yang Li	Teresa	Salma	Agnes
<b>Personal Essay</b>						
Strongly agree	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Narrative</b>						
Strongly agree	✓				✓	✓
Agree to some extent		✓	✓	✓		
<b>Poetry</b>						
Strongly agree			✓		✓	
Agree to some extent	✓			✓		
Reject		✓				✓

### Meaningful Literacy as Pedagogy

By looking at six ESL female teacher trainees' pedagogical implications, it is clearly evident that this consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy has positively influenced their perceptions of L2 writing and its teaching approaches. Based on experiencing L2 writing as a personal resource that facilitates meaningful expression, the participants in this study indicated their tendencies to integrate meaningful literacy instruction in their future teaching contexts mainly to enhance self-expression. However, the six participants reflected different teaching preferences regarding the three meaningful literacy genres— personal essay, narrative, and poem— that were employed in this study.

The six participants showed their willingness to implement personal essay writing in their future writing classrooms. Most of the participants demonstrated that since this type of literacy instruction utilizes learners' personal lives, it would be helpful to polish learners' composition, linguistic, and cognitive skills. From a teaching perspective, two of the participants pointed out that teaching an essay would be easier because it has clear



instructions, rules, and formats. Interestingly, Jasmine's held beliefs have clearly influenced her pedagogical decisions on using the personal essay. She explicated that she would use the personal essay because she found it easy, as well as she claimed that it is the only thing that students need to know.

Again, for narrative writing, almost all the participants showed their tendencies to integrate personal narrative in their classes but to varying degrees. Tina and Agnes reflected that they would implement narrative writing in their classes because they believe that every student has a story to tell, and that narrative is a kind of writing where you create it, own it, and feel attached to it. Yang Li and Teresa suggested the incorporation of narrative writing adopting some modification: Yang Li emphasized the need to develop clear instructions for narrative writing while Teresa planned to increase learners' lexical awareness of using sophisticated words. Salma decided to use narrative writing as a motivational and creative act, which might promote L2 learners' authorship. However, Jasmine indicated that because she personally does not like to share her life story with a teacher and since narrative entails the expression of bad experiences, she might use narrative but would not "force" students to write in this specific genre. Also, her view on how a narrative should be written and how skillful the narrator should be has affected her decision.

As for poetry writing, one can notice that the participants' previous understandings and exposure to poetry has clearly influenced their teaching preferences. Two of the participants showed a great passion to integrate poetry teaching in their classes. Salma described this type of writing as helpful since it allows L2 learners to talk freely about any topic, to be creative, and to notice the relationship between form and

meaning. Yang Li referred to the process of poetry writing as fun because it allows learners to creatively think about vocabularies and organizing structures. Teresa and Tina demonstrated that they would use poetry writing, emphasizing that this would be only if the learners master an advanced level of English proficiency. For Teresa, this might be based on the difficulties in assessing poetry while Tina believes that poems do not have specific grammar or pattern, which makes them confusing for the beginning learners. As for Agnes and Jasmine, they rejected the idea of teaching L2 poetry. This decision was basically influenced by their previous understandings of poetry structure, and that poetry writing is not learned but it is a talent.

Taken altogether, the six ESL female teacher trainees showed their intentions to integrate meaningful literacy instruction in their future teaching contexts. The main goal is to nurture L2 learners' subjectivities through the use of L2 literacy practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the role of a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy in influencing six ESL female teacher trainees' perceptions and understandings of L2 writing. Another main aim for this study was to explore their opinions on implementing this approach for teaching writing in ESL/EFL contexts. In an attempt to summarize the research findings, the first part of this chapter discusses three themes that emerged from data analysis. The main goal of this discussion is to address the main inquiries for this study, which I restate below:

1. Does a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy influence ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing?
2. If so, what are their perspectives towards implementing this approach in teaching writing?

Based on the discussion of the emergent themes, the other parts of this chapter outline the implications of this research in terms of teacher education and pedagogical ramifications. Finally, the chapter reviews the limitations of this study and offers recommendations for further research.

The principal goal for conducting this study is to broaden the conceptual basis upon which we think about language learning and L2 literacy teaching. In fact, there is an emerging trend for second and foreign language pedagogy to move away from the dehumanized and instrumental language learning to a socialized, historicized, and personalized context that focuses on the learner as the subject of the learning process

(Elbow, 1994; Hanauer, 2003, 2012; Kramsch, 2006, 2009; Pennycook, 2004). Hanauer (2012) has proposed meaningful literacy pedagogy, poetry writing in particular, as “a simple way of achieving these aims and personalizing the language classroom” (p. 10). The current study expands meaningful literacy instruction as a significant approach to raise ESL/EFL teacher trainees’ awareness of what is meant by personalized language learning and to contribute in making such change of perceptions.

### **Multiple Perspectives on Language Education**

The findings of this study enable the understanding of multiple perspectives on language learning and teaching. Part of this understanding lies in the perception of the language learning process as a human endeavor while it considers L2 writing as an act for reflecting learners’ individualities. Three different yet significantly interrelated understandings emerging from this meaningful literacy teacher consciousness raising exercise include: writing as a personal resource, writing as an empowering experience, and moving towards a humanized classroom. These understandings draw upon the ways in which the six ESL female teacher trainees perceived second language writing, reflected on the value of this consciousness raising exercise, and supported meaningful literacy instruction as a teaching approach in ESL/EFL contexts.

### **Writing as a Personal Resource**

The findings of this study reflect the view of L2 writing as a humanizing personal resource that extends language use to facilitate personally meaningful expression. The participants justified their understandings behind the meaningfulness of each task as relating to the interaction of those writing tasks with their human capacities. By using personal experiences, memories, and innermost thoughts and feelings as the context for

language use, L2 writing becomes a reflective process and an embodied performance. The participants engaged personally, emotionally, and cognitively during the production of meaningful content. This type of perspective is similar to the one held by many scholars such as Hanauer (2012), Lapidus et al. (2013), Park (2013a, 2013b), and Chamcharatsri (2013). In this case, L2 writing ceases to be a tool or a final product, but becomes a personal resource for reconstructing life experiences that leads to personal and emotional insights; it is “a way of “knowing”—a method of [self-] discovery and analysis” (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). Such realization not only endorses new perspectives on L2 writing, but also adds profound insights into the main purpose for language learning and use.

When the personal expression and reflection are situated at the center of literacy practice, the real purpose for language learning and use relates to “widening one’s experience resources and positioning oneself in a multicultural and multilingual world” (Hanauer, 2012. p. 10). In this sense, learners use language to make sense of themselves and the world they live in (Hanauer, 2012; Park, 2013b). Even though this research design consists of a consciousness raising exercise on the role of meaningful literacy, some arguments such as increasing one’s lexical knowledge to best express thoughts and true feelings might support learners’ understandings of language learning as a human endeavor.

In this study, writing as a personal resource appears in every situation, in which the participants were able to fully express themselves, negotiate their identities, reveal how they were socialized in a community, evaluate their past experiences, or go through some forms of personal healing. However, the lack of exposure to some of the

meaningful literacy genres has negatively affected the meaningfulness of some of the participants' writing events. This obviously relates to the fact that when the structural issues become the main focus during the writing process, writing becomes a decontextualized act, in which the writers lose any chance for expressing their innermost thoughts and feelings (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Iida, 2008).

Overall, although this meaningful literacy consciousness raising exercise cannot be considered as a full experience of meaningful literacy, it introduces multiple understandings of L2 writing as a personal resource to reconstruct and reflect on past experiences and memories. Through this personal reflection, language learning and writing becomes a human activity involving "an emotional and embodied experience in addition to being a cognitive process" (Hanauer, 2012, p. 4). This research postulates meaningful literacy instruction as a way for humanizing language learning and teaching from the perspective of six ESL female teacher trainees. Therefore, this research builds on Kramsch's (2009) and Hanauer's (2012) call for the reorientation of second and foreign language pedagogy from a decontextualized and managerial language learning process, to a contextualized and personally meaningful activity. As such, this consciousness raising exercise provides empirical data on the subjective participants' experiences and the expression of their humanities through meaningful literacy.

### **Writing as an Empowering Experience**

The analysis of the participants' perspectives suggests meaningful writing as an empowering experience. This concept of empowerment refers to the potentiality of meaningful literacy instruction to overcome the absence of voice and enhance the sense of language ownership; characteristics that are crucial to humanize and personalize the

language learning experience. Both previous studies and the current study assert that empowering L2 writers as the context for language use, plays a major role in manifesting their authorship and ownership of the second language (Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Iida, 2008; Lapidus et al., 2013; Liu, 2008; Park, 2013b; Pavlenko, 2001). This manifestation appears in many situations throughout this consciousness raising exercise.

First, the participants demonstrated their abilities to use the second language to express themselves, which is an act they used to do in their L1. In this sense, writing about their own personal experiences, emotions, and internal worlds allowed the participants to present their perspectives and express their individualities in the second language; a significant experience promoting their ownership of the new language (Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Iida, 2008; Lapidus et al., 2013; Park, 2013b). According to Hanauer (2012), the moment, at which L2 learners use the second language to express their experiences and internal worlds, is “a powerful one, and one that can qualitatively change a student’s perception of the new language that they are using” (pp. 6-7). Thus, Hanauer’s (2012) research and the current research emphasize the idea that, in writing about the personal experiences, the “second language ceases to be a tool and becomes a personal resources and an ‘owned’ language” (p. 7).

Furthermore, participants viewed the assigned tasks as a process of retelling their own life stories because meaningful literacy instruction employs one’s life experiences as the source for language use. Thus, participants were able to express their own voices and reflect their authorship of the written text by perceiving themselves as the creators of the story. This finding is in line with Park’s (2013b) research that adult English language

learners were empowered as legitimate language users through constructing their own stories.

In addition, by writing about their personal life, participants showed a sense of richness of their internal world. In other words, meaningful literacy instruction enabled the participants to legitimize their lived experiences as “valuable assets and resources” in L2 context, offering them chances to find power and legitimacy in the target language (Park, 2013b, p. 343). As such, meaningful literacy instruction allows L2 learners to overcome the absence of voice by gaining this sense of richness of the internal world (Hanauer, 2012). This finding adds to the significance of personal writing discussed in some of the autobiographical writing studies such as Lapidus et al.’s (2013), Liu’s (2008), and Park’s (2013a, 2013b).

Further finding of L2 ownership relates to the participants’ sense of accomplishment and familiarity with the content. These two aspects appear as empowering features that led the participants to show an authorship and ownership of the language. For two of the participants, writing a creative piece—narrative and/or poetry—in the second language enhanced their sense of accomplishment, as they perceived themselves as legitimate special English writers. The current study, in line with Hanauer’s (2010, in press), and Iida’s (2008, 2012) research, supports writing creatively in the second language as an enabling process through which the writers feel the significance of their writing, which further nurtures their authorship in the L2. In addition, this study provides some evidence of the value of meaningful literacy instruction as a way to increase L2 learners’ level of confidence in writing (Iida, 2008; Park, 2010). By retelling their own life stories, some of the participants showed some



confidence in writing, and discussed the ease with which they performed the tasks since they were fully aware of the content. Although some participants found difficulties in narrative and poetry writing, their concerns were about the unfamiliarity with those genres or because writing about lived experiences triggered painful or forgotten memories. However, such feelings of accomplishment, confidence and comfort in using the second language have a powerful effect to positively impact learners' attitudes towards L2 writing. Ultimately, this set of powerful emotions has great influence on promoting L2 learners' ownership. According to Park (2013b), it is "a step that many needed in order to see themselves as legitimate writers in English" (Park, 2013b, p. 343).

Overall, the current study indicates the role of consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy, as prompting a new understanding of second and foreign language pedagogy. As such, language learning is not restricted to the acquisition of the linguistic symbols, but becomes a "goal-directed activity" (Park, 2013b, p. 338) that enhances the understanding of one's self and the world in which he/she lives (Hanauer, 2012). Based on this exercise, some participants reflected their perceptions of L2 writing as an empowering resource to overcome the absence of voice and reflect L2 writers' language ownership. Even though this brief teacher's consciousness raising exercise did not endorse a full experience of meaningful literacy, it offers an introduction to meaningful literacy, in which writing about the phenomenological personal experiences are useful to nurture L2 writers' ownership.

### **Moving Towards a Humanized classroom**

Participants recommend using meaningful literacy instruction as a teaching approach supporting the emerging trend to create humanized classrooms. Some

participants showed a resistant attitude towards implementing some of the meaningful literacy genres employed in this study—personal essay, narrative, and poem—because of their reluctance in sharing their life experiences or their unfamiliarity with the genres’ structure and format. However, the six ESL female teacher trainees agreed on the significance of working meaningfully with learners’ personal histories and L2 literacy in a language classroom. This position stems from a theoretical and practical perspective.

From a theoretical perspective, participants indicated their tendencies to implement meaningful literacy pedagogy to encourage L2 learners’ personal expression and reflection, thereby fostering ESL/EFL learners’ humanities and subjectivities in the language classroom. In this case, learners’ personal experience can be share and interpreted by others, adding qualitative data to what is meant by the humanized language learning experience which is “likely to engage learners cognitively, emotionally, morally and aesthetically” (Kramsch, 2009, p. 43). Furthermore, it emphasizes the relationship between situating learners’ unique experiences at the center of the literacy instruction and addressing learners’ subjectivities, which ultimately leads to a contextualized and historicized learning experience (Hanauer, 2012; Loureiro-Rodriguez, 2013; Park, 2013a, 2013b).

From a practical teaching perspective, the ESL female teacher trainees supported the use of meaningful literacy instruction as an effective approach to increase L2 learners’ fluency by enabling learners to freely express what they intend to say rather than what they can say. By doing so, L2 learners would be encouraged to expand their linguistic and lexical repertoire and would be trained in organizing their written texts since they are basically retelling their life stories. Therefore, in line with Garvin’s (2013)

and Hanauer's (2010) findings, the participants in this study also reflected meaningful literacy instruction as an effective pedagogy for L2 writing that would polish learners' composition, linguistic, and cognitive skills. Similar to other research findings, this study also asserts the significance of meaningful literacy as a teaching approach to motivate learners to extend their use of the second language, since it is derived from learners' true desires to express themselves (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Garvin, 2013; Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2013).

To sum up, the present research promotes contextualized and personalized language learning in ESL/EFL classrooms from the perspective of ESL learners/teachers. In addition, it proposes a methodological approach to reorient second and foreign language pedagogy towards humanized language learning and teaching, in which learners are perceived as unique individuals and language learning is considered as a part of the process of being human (Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2012; Kramsch, 2006, 2009). Based on the findings of this research, meaningful literacy instruction provides an effective way for enacting this change, by situating learners' personal experiences at the center of literacy practice.

### **Pedagogical Ramification**

Based on the findings of this study, there are some pedagogical implications that are linked to teacher education and language teaching and learning. In fact, this consciousness raising exercise has to some extent influenced six ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing and language learning in general. Accordingly, I suggest the integration of meaningful literacy training throughout teacher education programs. Promoting this training to a large group of language teachers

would be beneficial in many different aspects. First, this consciousness raising exercise is a good step to create a reorientation towards second or foreign language pedagogy; it is valuable to enable the teacher to build up their conceptualizations of humanized language teaching based on their own personal experiences of meaningful literacy practices. It is also useful to widen teachers' knowledge of the effective methodologies for personalizing and humanizing L2 learning and teaching contexts. Additionally, this consciousness raising exercise is crucial to heighten teachers' awareness of different writing genres. As shown in the study, some of the participants found difficulties in writing narratives or poetry due to their unfamiliarity with those genres. Therefore, a training on ESL narrative and poetry writings would be helpful for prospective teachers to have an insight on how to use those genres, and thereby know how to implement narrative and poetry in teaching L2 writing.

One of the interesting findings in this study is the spontaneous process with which the six ESL female teacher trainees described their writing practices; as they were engaged in a reflective process, directed by their expressive needs. Such outcome of meaningful literacy instruction may inform teaching writing in ESL/EFL classrooms. While academic writing and accuracy usually take precedence in L2 composition classrooms, L2 learners are inclined to focus on structural factors, having no space to express themselves or to construct their voices. Therefore, this study suggests the implementation of meaningful literacy instruction as a crucial tool to contextualize and personalize writing pedagogies within ESL/EFL writing classrooms.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

This study explicates the role of a brief teachers' consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy in postulating new understandings of language learning and writing. If those understandings reflect the experiences of a wider population, the ensuing results would be more generalizable. Consequently, I suggest conducting this study on a larger scale adopting similar procedures with some modifications. First, I recommend the implementation of this consciousness raising exercise for a longer duration, so that the participants would have a better understanding on how to write in meaningful literacy genres; then, they would be able to express their understandings based on sufficient amount of experience. Also, I suggest the inclusion of some interview questions that are directed to the participants' perspectives on the process of language learning through practicing meaningful literacy events. This might enhance profound insights into the real purpose of language learning and use.

In addition, since the participants in this study are MA TESOL learners who have advanced language proficiency, it would be valuable to include participants with lower levels of language proficiency. This would raise the awareness of the extent to which meaningful literacy instruction motivates learners with limited language proficiency to use the second or foreign language. It also seems beneficial to notice the progression of their language and writing skills based on implementing meaningful literacy approach.

Finally, this study showed some of the participants' tendencies to link poetry writing to a kind of writers who are proficient, talented, and skillful in L2 writing. Further studies would be helpful to have a deep understanding of the underlying reasons for such

position which, in turn, might help literacy educators to develop an effective approach for teaching poetry writing.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study regards the size of the population. The views expressed by six ESL female teachers cannot be generalized to apply to all EFL/ESL teachers and learners. Nevertheless, being a qualitative study, researchers “are not generally concerned with generalizing their findings to larger populations, they are usually hoping that the interpretations of their data can be transferred to other situations” (Perry, 2005, p. 58).

Another limitation relates to recruiting only female participants for this study. Conducting this study on male and female participants will give broader and complementary perspectives about meaningful literacy pedagogy. Nonetheless, with the increasing number of women teaching English all over the world, limiting this study to female participants is an attempt to voice this previously oppressed but emerging group in research.

Finally, this study was conducted as a consciousness raising exercise for ESL teacher trainees, in which the participants experienced writing in each genre only once. Having a longer training in which the participants could have a longer meaningful literacy experience or practice meaningful literacy genres multiple times would give them a chance to fully understand the value of this type of writing instruction. Nevertheless, this study should be considered an initial step for many language educators towards the reorientation of second/ foreign language pedagogy.

## Final Remarks

This study started with the questions: Does a consciousness raising exercise in meaningful literacy influence six ESL female teacher trainees' understandings and attitudes towards L2 writing? If so, what are their perspectives towards implementing this approach in teaching writing? One answer to this question is that situating the personal experiences, internal feelings, and held beliefs at the center of literacy practice allowed the participants to perceive L2 writing as a meaningful resource for personal expression and reflection, in which the written language is “an owned language” ( Hanauer, 2012, p. 7). Therefore, meaningful literacy instruction might be beneficial as an empowering tool to legitimize L2 learners' authorship and ownership of the language.

As seen here, the findings foster profound insights about L2 writing and language learning in general and support findings from many previous studies. Mainly, this study allows different orientations to second language teaching and learning. Those orientations, as discussed in this chapter, encourage the growing trend to move away from instrumental language learning, in which teaching is perceived as the implementation of pedagogical practice, towards a contextualized and personalized language learning, where the learner is seen as a human being (Elbow, 1994; Hanauer, 2003, 2012; Kramersch, 2006, 2009; Pennycook, 2004).

A further answer to the current research indicates the value of meaningful literacy instruction as a pedagogical approach to humanize the language learning experience. Although the participants reflected different preferences and attitudes towards the three writing genres employed in this study—personal essay, narrative, and poem— they advocated the use of meaningful literacy instruction in their future teaching contexts to

enhance learners' understandings of their personal growth and to intensify their language skills.



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## APPENDIX A

### Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study on the value of meaningful writing act in teaching writing in ESL/EFL contexts, so as an ESL MA TESOL teacher trainer, sharing your perspective is fundamental to this study. Please read the following information carefully and if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to explore the contributions of meaningful writing to promote L2 writing. Since you are currently enrolled in the MA TESOL program, in which you are being prepared to teach in the future, this study will provide you the chance to think about the advantages of meaningful writing and how to apply it in your future teaching contexts. Participation in this study will require approximately 60 minutes meeting for three times. In each meeting, you will have a writing task (essay writing, narrative writing, and poetry writing) for forty minutes. To examine your perspectives and reflection, you will be interviewed shortly after you perform the task. The interview will be recorded, and it will take approximately 20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decide not to take part in the study or you may choose to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. If you agree to participate, all information about you will be kept strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity. Also, the electronic documents will be kept on a password-protected computer with limited access to the researcher only. If you choose to withdraw at some point, you may do so by simply contacting me on the email address provided below. Upon your request to withdraw, all your data from the interview and all of your writings will be destroyed.

While the information obtained from this study may be presented at conferences and may be used in a published research article, no participants will be identified by name nor will the researchers use any other identifying information.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement on the next page. Take the extra copy with you. If you choose not to participate, simply drop the unsigned form on the table.

Project Director: Muna Alosaimi  
Candidate for MA TESOL  
970 Lilac street, Apt 1  
Indiana, PA 15701  
Phone : 724-541-4039  
Email : [vpts@iup.edu](mailto:vpts@iup.edu)

Thesis Chair: Dr. David I. Hanauer  
Professor of English Department  
215D Leonard Hall,  
English Department, Indiana University  
Phone : 724-357-2274  
Email : [Hanauer@iup.edu](mailto:Hanauer@iup.edu)

Informed Consent Form (Continued)

Voluntary Consent Form:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name: (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature:

Date:

Phone number:

E-mail:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature

Date

## APPENDIX B

### Presentation Protocol

Hello,

My name is Muna Alosaimi. I am a second year MA TESOL student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In a partial fulfillment of the requirement for my MA degree, I am conducting a qualitative study on the perspectives of ESL female teachers towards the value of meaningful writing act.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether meaningful writing act, such as narrative and poetry writing, influence ESL female teacher trainers' understandings and attitudes of second language writing. It also seeks understanding of their perspectives towards implementing meaningful writing in ESL/EFL classrooms.

First of all, I would like to give you a brief introduction about meaningful writing. The process of making writing a meaningful practice is built on the idea that L2 writing should provide the potential to explore learners' lived experiences, emotions, and innermost ideas, as well as to construct their identities through language. Since you are currently enrolled in the MA TESOL program, in which you are being prepared to teach in the future, this study will provide you the chance to experience meaningful writing and to think of how to apply it in your future teaching contexts. It also may change your perception of L2 writing. Moreover, sharing your perspective is fundamental to evaluate meaningful writing as pedagogical practice

Participation in this study will require approximately 60 minutes meeting for three times. In each meeting, you will have a writing task (essay writing, narrative writing, and poetry writing) for approximately forty minutes. To examine your perspectives and reflection, you will be interviewed shortly after you perform the task. The interview will be recorded, and it will take approximately 20 minutes.

Female ESL MA TESOL teacher trainers are invited to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to choose the time and the place for meeting. Also, you are free to decide not to take part in the study or you may choose to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. If you agree to participate, all information about you will be kept strictly confidential.

Your cooperation in this study is highly appreciated.

Thank you

## APPENDIX C

### Task One

Task one: Think about a challenging experience you have had. Please write a one-to-two page essay about this experience. Make sure you provide relevant examples to support your ideas.

## APPENDIX D

### Task Two

Task two: Think about a challenging experience you have had. Please write a one-to-two page narrative expressing this experience.

## APPENDIX E

### Task Three

Task three: Think about a challenging experience you have had. Please write a poem expressing this experience. The poem can be as simple as describing a single image. Your poem does not have to be rhyme. Try to capture a moment.

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Questions

#### Section one: Understanding of the task

1. Think about the task you just did. Was this a meaningful task for you?
2. Why or why not?
3. In what ways do you think this writing task contribute to your ability to write in English?

#### Section two: Implication for teaching

4. Think about all three writing tasks. Which one of these tasks would you use for teaching and why?
5. What elements do you like/ dislike about each writing task?

# APPENDIX G

## IRB Approval Form



Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Stright Hall, Room 113  
210 South Tenth Street  
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705-1048

P 724-357-7730  
F 724-357-2715  
[irb-research@iup.edu](mailto:irb-research@iup.edu)  
[www.iup.edu/irb](http://www.iup.edu/irb)

October 29, 2013

Muna Saud Alosaimi  
970 Lilac Street, Apt. 1  
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear Ms. Alosaimi:

Your proposed research project, "The Perspectives of ESL Female Teachers towards the Value of Meaningful Literacy: A Qualitative Study," (Log No. 13-270) has been reviewed by the IRB and is approved as an expedited review for the period of October 28, 2013 to October 28, 2014.

It is also important for you to note that IUP adheres strictly to Federal Policy that requires you to notify the IRB promptly regarding:

1. any additions or changes in procedures you might wish for your study (additions or changes must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented),
2. any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects, and
3. any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in (2).

Should you need to continue your research beyond October 28, 2014 you will need to file additional information for continuing review. Please contact the IRB office at (724) 357-7730 or come to Room 113, Stright Hall for further information.

The IRB may review or audit your project at random *or* for cause. In accordance with IUP Policy and Federal Regulation (45CFR46.113), the Board may suspend or terminate your project if your project has not been conducted as approved or if other difficulties are detected

Although your human subjects review process is complete, the School of Graduate Studies and Research requires submission and approval of a Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF) before you can begin your research. If you have not yet submitted your RTAF, the form can be found at <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=91683>.

I wish you success as you pursue this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Mills".

John A. Mills, Ph.D., ABPP  
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
Professor of Psychology

JAM:jeb

Cc: Dr. David Hanauer, Thesis Advisor  
Ms. Brenda Boal, Secretary