Process and post-process: A discursive history
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Abstract

While the term post-process can be useful as a heuristic for expanding the scope of the field of second language writing, the uncritical adoption of this and other keywords can have serious consequences because they often oversimplify the historical complexity of the intellectual developments they describe. In order to provide a critical understanding of the term post-process in its own historical context, this article examines the history of process and post-process in composition studies, focusing on the ways in which terms such as current-traditional rhetoric, process, and post-process have contributed to the discursive construction of reality. Based on this analysis, I argue that the use of the term post-process in the context of L2 writing needs to be guided by a critical awareness of the discursive construction process. I further argue that the notion of post-process needs to be understood not as the rejection of process but as the recognition of the multiplicity of L2 writing theories and pedagogies.

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The term “post-process” arose in composition studies during the early 1990s and quickly became one of the important keywords, shaping the development of an intellectual current in the field. In his introduction to this special post-process issue of the Journal of Second Language Writing, Atkinson locates the origin of the term in Trimbur’s (1994) review article in College Composition and Communication, although, as he notes, the critique of the process movement had begun much earlier. The “social turn” in composition studies was already in

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full swing by the late 1980s (Berlin, 1988; Bizzell, 1986; Faigley, 1986), and in the summer of 1993, a conference was held in order to explore the possibilities of post-process pedagogies (Shamoon, 1995). Once the term was in place, theorists began to use it in exploring this notion and its implications from a variety of perspectives (Dobrin, 1997; Kent, 1999b; McComiskey, 2000; cf. Tobin, 2001). Since the field of second language writing has borrowed substantially from composition studies in developing its own brand of the process movement (Krapels, 1990; Susser, 1994), it seems important to consider the notion of post-process and its implications in the L2 context.

As Atkinson suggests, the use of the term “post-process” in the context of L2 writing has certain heuristic value in opening up new possibilities for the consideration of L2 writing theory, research, and instruction. Indeed, introducing what Bruffee (1984) has called “abnormal discourse” that sets aside the conventional discourse practices of a community can “[help] us — immersed as we inevitably are in the everyday normal discourse of our disciplines and professions — to see the provincial nature of normal discourse and of the communities defined by normal discourse” (p. 648). At the same time, the use of concepts developed in another site of intellectual practices can have serious consequences and therefore needs to be approached critically (Matsuda & Jablonski, 2000). The purpose of this article is to provide a more nuanced understanding of the development of the term “post-process” in the context of composition studies and to consider its implications for the use of the term in L2 writing. The version of history that I choose to tell in this article focuses on the discursive construction of process and post-process in composition studies. My goal in doing so is to call attention to the ways in which terms like process and post-process contribute to the discursive construction of reality within a site of intellectual practice.

Although, in this article, I critique the discursive construction of the history of composition studies and second language writing, I do not mean to deny that my own work also participates in the process of discursive construction. While it is impossible to escape the discursive construction altogether, I have tried to reduce the risk of appropriation by reproducing, as much as possible, the exact wording of the works I consider. Unconventional though it may be to quote from sources so extensively, it is important for the purpose of this article, which examines the ways in which those texts contributed to the construction of some of the key terms and concepts that have shaped the development of composition studies and second language writing. After all, the very wording of these sources constitutes the data in this study.

1 My perspective is also undoubtedly influenced by my affiliation with institutions that are sometimes perceived — reductively, I might add — as representatives of two contrasting perspectives in composition studies: Purdue University, home of the late James A. Berlin, and the University of New Hampshire, home of Donald M. Murray and Donald Graves as well as the late Robert J. Connors. I encourage readers to undertake their own historical studies to develop an even richer understanding of composition studies and second language writing.
The discursive construction of the process movement

Popular lore among proponents of the process movement (see Crowley, 1998; Tobin, 1994, 2001) has it that process pedagogy arose in the late 1960s and the early 1970s in reaction to the dominance of a product-centered pedagogy, which has come to be known as current-traditional rhetoric. In the bad old days of current-traditional rhetoric, the story goes, students learned modes of discourse and applied them to write their five-paragraph themes on topics assigned by the teacher, which were then graded without the opportunity to receive feedback or to revise. Then, along came the advocates of process pedagogy who emphasized the importance of teaching writing not as product but as process: of helping students discover their own voice; of recognizing that students have something important to say; of allowing students to choose their own topic; of providing teacher and peer feedback; of encouraging revision; and of using student writing as the primary text of the course. At about the same time, research on the act of composing began to appear, providing empirical support for the teaching of writing as a process. The rise of process, the story continues, led the field toward a paradigm shift, revolutionizing the teaching of composition and providing a renewed sense of respectability for the profession.

This popular historical narrative is not entirely unfounded. Some of the most influential statements on the notion of writing as process that set the contemporary process movement in motion did begin to appear in the late 1960s and the early 1970s (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Coles, 1974; Dixon, 1967; Elbow, 1973; Emig, 1971; Macrorie, 1970; Moffett, 1968; Murray, 1968, 1972). These and other proponents of what has come to be known as “process pedagogy” did respond to what they considered to be a product-oriented and teacher-centered pedagogy in order to replace it with process-oriented and student-centered pedagogy. And an increasing number of teachers and programs began to emphasize what Susser (1994, p. 34; extracting from Kostelnick, 1989), has identified as the two essential features of process pedagogy: awareness and intervention. Borrowing analogically from Kuhn (1970), Hairston (1982) characterized the “move to a process-centered theory of teaching writing” as an indication that “our profession [i.e., composition studies] is probably in the first stages of a paradigm shift” (p. 77). There is no doubt that the process movement helped to call attention to aspects of writing that had been neglected in many writing classrooms; it also contributed to the professionalization of composition studies.

In recent years, however, this “thumbnail history” of the process movement (Crowley, 1998, p. 190) has come under serious scrutiny in composition studies. Although the popular history of the process movement captures its “powerful legacy” (Tobin, 1994, p. 4), it also oversimplifies the multiplicity of perspectives that have always been present throughout the 20th century. Miller (1991) has argued that, although the “process model has . . . stabilized a field that originally was a loosely connected set of untheorized practices claiming origins in rhetorical
theory, religious reading instruction, and the study of classical languages” (p. 115), it “has not yet provided an accurate or even a very historically different theory of contemporary writing, even if we grant it partial paradigmatic status” (p. 108). Fulkerson (1990) has also suggested that, although the rhetorical nature of writing had become a shared axiology, there were still “disparities . . . about process, pedagogy and epistemology” (p. 411). Harris (1997, pp. 54–55) also points out that Hairston’s (1982) claim regarding the paradigmatic status of the field was challenged by those who pointed out the multiplicity of process theories (i.e., Berlin, 1987, 1988; Bizzell, 1986; Faigley, 1986), highlighting the lack of consensus as to what constituted the paradigm.

In attempting to draw a clear-cut boundary between current-traditional and process “paradigms,” the popular history of process also created the impression that composition pedagogy before the process movement was methodologically monolithic. The process movement, however, was not the only attempt to reform composition instruction. In fact, the history of composition instruction over the last 100 years has seen a series of attempts at pedagogical reform (Applebee, 1974; Connors, 1996), and many of the tenets of process pedagogy existed long before the rise of the process movement in the latter half of the 20th century.

Newkirk (1994), for example, describes Barrett Wendell’s attempt at Harvard to “make composition a humane and intimate discipline” (pp. 116–117) by introducing practices that resembled process pedagogy, such as “writing conferences, the use of student writing as the primary texts of the course, peer critiquing, [and] analytic evaluation tools” (p. 119). Miller (1991) also notes that, during the early part of the 20th century, references to conference pedagogy appeared frequently in course descriptions at the University of Colorado (p. 71). Fred Newton Scott of the University of Michigan has also been credited with the promulgation of the principles of Deweyan progressive education in writing instruction (Berlin, 1984, 1987; Kitzhaber, 1953/1990; Stewart, 1995). Scott and his students — most notably, Charles C. Fries and Sterling Andrus Leonard — are also known for their attempts to replace “prescriptive” grammar with a grammar based on descriptions of the actual language usage (Berlin, 1987; Connors, 1997). Leonard’s work (1914, 1917) also evidenced many features resembling the characteristics of process-oriented pedagogical practices, including the denouncement of a focus on form, a developmental view of writing, and the use of freewriting and peer collaboration (Myers, 1986). More recently — two decades before the advent of the process movement — Barriss Mills (1953) of Purdue University proposed the notion of “writing as process” as a solution to overcrowded composition classrooms (Crowley, 1998, pp. 191–192).

Earlier attempts at pedagogical reform, however, did not attain the level of success that the contemporary process movement enjoyed in the 1970s and the 1980s. Wendell was “a failed reformer, a major innovator in composition pedagogy who never gained the needed support from the Harvard administration and particularly from its president, Charles Eliot” (Newkirk, 1994, p. 116).
Although Scott was successful in establishing his own Department of Rhetoric at Michigan, it was dismantled shortly after his retirement. The campaign against prescriptive grammar by his students also encountered strong reactions from those who opposed linguists’ insistence on being scientific and for their privileging of spoken language (Connors, 1997; Matsuda, 2001). The “democratic rhetoric” of Scott and his students “remained a force, especially in high schools, throughout the period and reemerged with considerable energy during the economically troubled thirties”; however, it never attained the status of dominance in the field (Berlin, 1987, p. 51).

By far, the contemporary process movement has been the most successful in the history of pedagogical reform in the teaching of writing. This is not to say that the process movement was able to replace traditional pedagogy completely with a new set of pedagogical practices. As Applebee (1986) points out, “there is almost always a gap between educational theory and educational practice, and process approaches are no exception” (pp. 97–98; see also Miller, 1991, p. 105). Today, some institutions are continuing to “discover” process pedagogy (see Schafer, 2001). Even where the notion of process has been embraced, the actual pedagogical practices sometimes resemble the lockstep rigidity of traditional pedagogy. Tobin (1994), for instance, laments that “the writing process has become an entity, even an industry, with a life of its own, certainly a life apart from its first theorists,” and relates the story of Donald Graves’ “shock and dismay when he first overheard two teachers discussing the differences between what they described as ‘the three-step and the four-step Graves writing process’” (p. 8; also see Tobin, 2001). Crowley (1998) further points out that current-traditional rhetoric continued to thrive after the advent of process pedagogy, while tenets of process, as soon as they began to appear in the late 1960s, were quickly appropriated by current-traditional rhetoric (p. 211).

Still, the contemporary process movement did achieve the status of dominance by the early 1980s — at least in the discourse practices of composition studies. As Applebee (1986) wrote, “there is no question that process approaches now dominate the professional literature on the teaching of writing” (p. 97). By the early 1980s, the influence of process had become so strong that, as Tobin (2001) notes, it began to “serve as a kind of disciplinary shibboleth”:

In the late 1970s and early 1980s you were either one of the process-oriented teachers arguing for student choice of topics and forms; the necessity of authentic voice; writing as a messy, organic, recursive form of discovery, growth, and personal expression; or you were a teacher who believed that we needed to resist process’ attack on rules, conventions, standards, quality, and rigor. (p. 4)

And, even though “the writing process movement, and particularly its emphasis on expressivism is frequently dismissed in contemporary scholarly books, journal articles, and conference papers, . . . it is still embraced by huge numbers of classroom teachers” (Tobin, 1994, p. 7).
The discursive construction of current-traditional rhetoric

As I have discussed, the late 20th-century process movement achieved a level of success that was unprecedented in comparison to previous reform efforts. While this success was largely due to the acceptance of many of the tenets of process pedagogy by composition teachers, it can also be attributed, at least partly, to the discursive construction of current-traditional rhetoric, which served as an impetus for the development of composition studies. According to Pullman (1999), “the reified expression current-traditional rhetoric does little more than create a daemon for the sake of expelling it” (p. 23). Miller (1991) also suggests that “current-traditional’ or ‘product’ theory appears to have been created at the same time that process theory was, to help explain process as a theory pitted against old practices” (p. 110).

The term “current-traditional rhetoric” itself originated in Daniel Fogarty’s Root for New Rhetoric, published in 1959. Fogarty (1959) used the term “current traditional” to describe the “traditional” ways in which textbooks taught principles of writing and rhetoric at the time. Fogarty’s notion of “current traditional” (without a hyphen) did not have as definite a shape as it was given two decades later. As Pullman (1999) explains, “Fogarty’s expression did not refer to a theory but was instead a shorthand and off-the-cuff way of alluding to the way the tradition of rhetoric was currently being purveyed in the Freshman Composition textbooks of his day” (p. 22). He further notes:

Because we forget this, we tend to think that current-traditional rhetoric was a bogus theory based on prejudice and misunderstanding, a kind of mindless application of traditional folklore or naive interpretations of Aristotle’s Rhetoric when in fact it did not exist as a theory except to the extent one could extrapolate a theory from the textbooks current at the time. (p. 22)

A more definite identity for current-traditional rhetoric was constructed in the midst of the process movement. Richard E. Young (1978) adopted the term “current-traditional rhetoric” in his “Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention.” In order to explain the lack of attention to invention in composition research, he suggested that the current-traditional rhetoric was informed by a “paradigm” — a set of assumptions about “what is included in the discipline and what is excluded from it, what is taught and not taught, what problems are regarded as important and unimportant, and, by implication, what research is regarded as valuable in developing the discipline” (p. 29). He defined current-traditional rhetoric in terms of “the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); and so on” (p. 31).

Young’s definition was then taken up by James A. Berlin (Berlin, 1980, 1984; Berlin & Inkster, 1980), who explored the features of current-traditional rhetoric systematically, and traced its development back to Richard Whately (1828/1963) through the textbooks written by Hill (1878) and Genung (1886). A decade later, Sharon Crowley (1990) undertook a book-length examination of the issue of invention in current-traditional rhetoric in The Methodical Memory. These scholars, though not all of them have been strong advocates of the process movement, have contributed significantly to the dislodging of what was considered to be the “most common method of teaching writing” (Berlin, 1980, p. 10). At the same time, they helped — in some cases inadvertently — to reify current-traditional rhetoric, thereby discursively constructing a caricature against which the process movement developed.

Proponents of process pedagogy have also come to agree that the process movement has constructed itself and others through “narratives of transformation” (Harris, 1997, p. 54). In his introduction to Taking Stock: The Writing Process Movement in the ’90s, Tobin (1994) acknowledges that “the story [of the process movement] presents, first, a caricature of life before the writing process movement and, second, a misleading image of unity and coherence during it” (p. 4). He also notes that “in spite of its excesses, I keep telling it because I believe that it conforms in some sense to a narrative or psychological (if not historical) reality of that period” (p. 4). Tobin is fully aware of the discursive construction facilitated by the narrative, as he writes:

In spite of all the scholarly talk about protocol analyses, paradigm shifts, and the making of knowledge, the history of composition is still written primarily through the stories we tell. Stories about the dreadful ways writing was taught — or not taught — when “we were in school”; stories about the miraculous changes brought about by the writing process movement, and, lately, stories about how some of those changes may not have been so miraculous after all. (p. 1)

Pullman (1999) goes one step further and argues that “the history of the writing-process movement is not so much a history as a rhetorical narrative” (p. 16), as if it were possible to avoid constructing rhetorical narratives. Although he acknowledges that “rhetorical narrative is not bad historiography,” he characterizes the discursive construction of the process movement as “the inevitable result of the search for coherence and unity among disparate texts and practices — the inevitable oversimplification that language always performs on experience” (pp. 21–22). It is this inevitable oversimplification that I want to examine next — in the context of the post-process construction of the process movement.

**The post-process construction of process**

A number of influential attempts to synthesize and critique various theories of writing process appeared in the latter half of the 1980s. In 1986, College English
published “Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal” by Lester Faigley (1986). Drawing on Berlin (1984), he identified two major theories of process — expressive and cognitive views — and added a third category of his own, the social view. In the same year, Patricia Bizzell (1986), in “Composing Processes: An Overview,” also classified the development of process theories into similar groups: the early theories focusing on personal style; research-oriented models of cognitive processes; and social and cultural orientations. Although she did not use the term “expressive” rhetoric, her first category, which focused on the individual and personal style, corresponded with expressive theories in Faigley’s scheme. Shortly after Faigley and Bizzell, Berlin also arrived at a similar, tripartite taxonomy. In “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class” (1988), he classified contemporary theories of rhetoric into three categories: cognitive, expressive, and social-epistemic.3

It is important to note here that, although these authors do tend to privilege the social view to varying degrees, they were not necessarily arguing against process pedagogy or the notion of process as a whole. Faigley (1986) wrote, for instance, “If process theory and pedagogy have up to now been unproblematically accepted, I see a danger that [they] could be unproblematically rejected” (p. 537). Instead of rejecting them altogether, he acknowledged the contributions each theory of process had made to the betterment of writing instruction, and suggested the need for “a broader conception of writing, one that understands writing processes are historically dynamic — not psychic states, cognitive routines, or neutral social relationships” (p. 537). Such awareness, he further wrote, “would allow us to reinterpret and integrate each of the theoretical perspectives” (p. 537).

Bizzell (1986) did not denounce the notion of process in its entirety, either. She pointed out that process research, though inconclusive, usefully suggested the need for smaller classes, the improvement of writing assessment, and the inclusion of a variety of writing tasks. As she later explained, she “aimed both to diminish the authority of cognitive research on composing, by suggesting that it is not the only legitimate kind of research in this area, and to encourage reading other kinds of work in composition studies as bearing on composing, so as to emphasize the social and political effects on composing” (Bizzell, 1992, p. 24). What she critiqued, then, was the wholesale adoption of a version of the “process approach” to the detriment of public and social aspects of writing processes. Similarly, Berlin’s (1988) Marxist critique focused on the ways in which each pedagogy was “imbricated in ideology,” and how cognitive and expressionistic rhetorics were “easily co-opted by the agencies of corporate capitalism, appropriated and distorted in the service of the mystifications of bourgeois individualism” (p. 492).

3Fulkerson (1990) also identified similar, though somewhat more complex, categories — cognitive-process views, linear-stage views, expressive views, social views, etc. He also pointed out the difficulty of classifying divergent theories. For instance, he discussed how Berlin’s (1984, 1987, 1988) classification of certain theorists shifted over time (Fulkerson, 1990, pp. 420–421). Earlier, he had also discussed the problem of classifying Elbow (1968) as an expressivist (Fulkerson, 1979, p. 346).
These influential taxonomies of composition theories and pedagogies developed by Faigley, Bizzell and Berlin, then, were not so much the rejection of process as a whole but of certain versions of process pedagogy or the ways in which they were co-opted by the dominant ideology. They did, however, pave the way for the arrival of “post-process” in the next decade. In 1994, Trimbur used the term “post-process” in referring to what had come to be known in composition studies as the “social turn” — the shift of emphasis from cognitive issues to larger social issues. He explained that the three books (Bizzell, 1992; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993; Spellmeyer, 1993) he reviewed reflect and enact what has come to be called the “social turn”…. a post-process, post-cognitivist theory and pedagogy that represent literacy as an ideological arena and composition as a cultural activity by which writers position and reposition themselves in relation to their own and others’ subjectivities, discourses, practices, and institutions. (Trimbur, 1994, p. 109)

In Trimbur’s view, the “social turn” seems to be equated with post-process while process is limited to the cognitive view. That Trimbur chose to draw the line between process and post-process along the cognitive-social divide is significant because, up to this point, expressive, cognitive, and social-epistemic perspectives were all “considered part of composition’s process paradigm” (Ward, 1994, p. 129). The use of the term “post-process” to denote the social view of writing reduced process to expressive and cognitive theories and pedagogies, while the social theories of composition became a separate category. This rhetorical move made the process movement even more vulnerable in the already shifting landscape of composition studies.4

Some post-process theorists seem to have followed Trimbur’s lead in positioning the social outside of the process “paradigm,” as evident in a number of essays in Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing Process Paradigm (Kent, 1999b). Yet, the post-process movement does not represent a unified theoretical front. Schilb (1999) notes, for example, that “a post-‘process’ approach to composition studies would not necessarily ban the term” (p. 198). Responding to Kent’s definition of post-process, McComiskey (2000) has sought to define post-process not as the rejection of the process movement but as its extension. Kent (1999a) also acknowledges in his introduction to Post-Process Theory that contributors to the volume “may disagree about the nature of the ‘post’ in ‘post-process’ theory,” although “all of them agree that change is in the air” (p. 5). With this diversity of

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4 Later in the same year, the term “post-process pedagogy” appeared in the title of an article by Anthony Paré (1994), published in English Quarterly. Like Trimbur, he used the term in referring to the view of “writing as a social act” in contrast to the cognitive view of writing that emerged “when psychology was the dominant influence on composition studies” (p. 4). Despite the title of his article, however, Paré used the term “social process” (p. 4) several times in his article, suggesting the ambivalent position that the social view of writing occupied in relation to process theories and pedagogy.
perspectives in mind, he suggests that post-process theorists consider the act of writing to be “public,” “interactive,” and “situated”:

Breaking with the still-dominant process tradition in composition studies, post-process theory — or at least the different incarnations of post-process theory discussed by many of the authors represented in this collection — endorses the fundamental idea that no codifiable or generalizable writing process exists or could exist. (p. 1)

In other words, Kent has construed “process” as an attempt to develop “a generalized process or a Big Theory” (p. 1; see also Olson, 1999). Proponents of process, according to him, claim “that writing constitutes a process of some sort and that this process is generalizable, at least to the extent that we know when to intervene in someone’s writing process or to the extent that we know the process that experienced or ‘expert’ writers employ as they write” (p. 1).

This claim, however, seems at odds with Bizzell (1986) who, in her review of process theories, wrote that “composition scholars agree that the composing process exists or, rather, that there is a complex of activities out of which all writing emerges” (p. 49; see also Liebman-Kleine, 1986, p. 785; Tobin, 2001, pp. 10–11). While Kent is careful to note the divergence of perspectives among proponents of post-process theory, the term “post-process” seems to be used in his volume as a way of solidifying disparate critiques of so-called expressive and cognitive theories and pedagogies. That is, post-process in composition studies seems to be on its way to constructing its own narrative of transformation with process as the necessary caricature.

The discursive construction of process in second language writing

As I have tried to demonstrate, the use of key terms such as “current-traditional rhetoric,” “process,” and “post-process” has contributed significantly to the discursive construction of the history of composition studies. On one hand, these terms have helped to clarify changing currents in the intellectual practices of composition studies; on the other hand, they have oversimplified the multiplicity of perspectives within each “paradigm.” These keywords also imposed discursively constructed boundaries on complex historical developments, as new “paradigms” criticized previously dominant theories and pedagogies for certain features while appropriating or ignoring other features — as in the post-process dismissal of social process theories and pedagogies. Such negotiation is inevitable because knowledge is discursively constructed in so far as discourse is used as the dominant medium of thought and communication (Bazerman, 1988; Berger & Luckman, 1966; Rorty, 1979).

This discursive construction is not limited to philosophical or historical modes of inquiry that are more prevalent in composition studies than in second language writing. Although Santos (1992) has suggested that L2 writing is informed by
scientific research methodology that “has as its foundation an idealized adherence to neutrality and objectivity” (p. 8), empirical inquiry — qualitative or quantitative — cannot remain aloof from the process of discursive construction in so far as research problems are constructed discursively (Swales, 1990), participants and data are represented discursively (Spack, 1997), and findings and their implications are considered and articulated discursively (Bazerman, 1988). Furthermore, since what we refer to as the “field of second language writing” is not a physical reality but a set of socially shared (and negotiated) assumptions about a constellation of intellectual activities, any characterization of its status and development inevitably constitutes participation in the discursive construction of the field.5

In fact, much of the popular history of L2 writing also resulted from the kind of discursive construction process that overlooked certain historical complexities for the sake of unity and coherence. Just as composition studies arose as a field by positioning itself against the perceived — or constructed — dominance of current-traditional rhetoric, second language writing emerged as an important instructional and research agenda by constructing its own current-traditional pedagogy to blame: the audiolingual approach. Today, it is commonly believed that the dominance of the audiolingual approach (or method) was the reason for the neglect of writing prior to the 1960s (e.g., Leki, 1992; Susser, 1994). As I have pointed out elsewhere (Matsuda, 2001), however, it was the proponents of the audiolingual approach who first began to argue the need to consider L2 writing instruction in the early 1960s.

When articles on writing began to appear in second language journals such as Language Learning and TESOL Quarterly in the 1960s, the audiolingual approach was not mentioned as the reason for the neglect of writing. On the contrary, articles on L2 writing during the 1960s often constructed themselves as applications of the principles of what came to be known as the audiolingual approach or its precursor, the oral approach (e.g., Erazmus, 1960; Pincas, 1962). It was not until the 1970s that articles on second language writing began to mention en masse the audiolingual approach as the reason for the neglect of writing in second language instruction (e.g., Buckingham, 1979; Paulston, 1972).6 In other words, the perceived dominance of the audiolingual approach served as a discursive exigency for second language writing research during the 1970s — much the same way current-traditional rhetoric served the process movement.

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5 It is true that the field is embodied in its disciplinary infrastructure, such as the Journal of Second Language Writing and the Symposium on Second Language Writing, as well as other publications with “second language writing” or some variation of it in their titles. While they do influence the way the field is perceived, however, they do not delimit its boundaries. Publications that are not explicitly related to second language writing are also constantly being incorporated into the field by means of citation, for example, thus entering the collective consciousness of second language writing teachers and researchers.

6 For a detailed analysis of the audiolingual approach and the origin of second language writing research and instruction, see Matsuda (2001).
The current borrowing of the term “post-process” is also susceptible to the same type of oversimplification and appropriation in the process of negotiating the discursive formation of second language writing. The term “post-process era” presupposes the existence of the process era; however, such a historical period cannot easily be delineated. As was the case with process in composition studies, process in second language writing did not suddenly appear in the late 1970s. Although composing process research from composition studies was not formally introduced to second language studies until Zamel’s 1976 article, “Teaching Composition in the ESL Classroom: What We Can Learn from the Research in the Teaching of English,” approaches to writing that resemble process pedagogy in composition studies had already begun to enter the discourse of second language studies in the early 1960s — even before D. Gordon Rohman’s (Rohman, 1965; Rohman & Wlecke, 1964) ground-breaking work on pre-writing in composition studies. In as early as 1960, Edward Erazmus (1960) proposed the application of Kenneth L. Pike’s tagmemics as an invention strategy, which was introduced to composition studies later by Pike himself and his colleagues at Michigan (Pike, 1964; Young, Becker, & Pike, 1970). Erazmus also discussed the use of “rapid writing,” in which the student can write freely without the inhibitions often attending composition writing “such as grammar errors and stylistics” (1960, p. 30). Similarly, Brière (1966) used “the technique of free association in writing” (p. 144) in his study of the effect of emphasizing quantity over quality in L2 writing instruction. Their pedagogy bear striking resemblance to freewriting that would later become one of the hallmarks of process pedagogy in composition studies through the work of Peter Elbow (1973, 1981).7

Process-like thinking in L2 writing is also evident in the works of Nancy Arapoff (1967, 1969) and Mary S. Lawrence (1972). In “Writing: A Thinking Process,” for example, Arapoff (1967) argued that “writing is much more than an orthographic symbolization of speech; it is, most importantly, a purposeful selection and organization of experience” (Arapoff, 1967, p. 33; italics in original). Writing as a Thinking Process by Lawrence (1972), which was published under the auspices of the English Language Institute at Michigan, also “treat[ed] writing not as an end-product to be evaluated and graded but as an activity, a process, which the student can learn how to accomplish” (p. 3; italics in original). Unlike conventional, modes-based textbooks, it stressed the importance of teaching the methods of organization “inductively” (p. 6) and of using “pre-writing discussion” to facilitate meta-awareness of the writing task (p. 7).

Although Lawrence’s textbook was still largely exercise-oriented with a focus on sentence- and paragraph-level concerns, and although it does not appear anything like the rigid conception of process that became dominant in the 1980s,
its guidelines for writing assignments emphasized awareness and intervention, the two essential features of process writing pedagogy (Susser, 1994). Lawrence stressed that her approach to writing “attempts to maximize each student’s intellectual participation in the writing process” (p. 4). She continued:

It demands that each student be at all times engaged in an internal dialogue. He must be actively aware of the goals he is attempting to achieve and of the cognitive methods he is utilizing. Thus, writing as a process of active thinking is inextricably linked to student independence and student accountability. (p. 4)

In order to facilitate development through awareness, Lawrence encouraged teachers to provide feedback with a focus on “improvement and development”:

The teacher’s attitude should be positive; student writing should not be measured against a hypothetical standard of perfection. Most importantly, the teacher must realize that correcting papers, evaluating student writing, and assigning grades is not the primary aim of the writing class: teaching students how to write is! (p. 10; italics in original)

It is also significant that Lawrence appears to have derived her theoretical principles directly from Bruner (1960, 1962, 1966), whose work precipitated the rise of process pedagogy in composition studies (Berlin, 1987; Crowley, 1998). As she writes: “A detailed account of the general theoretical principles of cognition on which the text is based can be found in the writings of Jerome S. Bruner of the Center for Cognitive Studies, Harvard University” (Lawrence, 1972, p. 3).

Buckingham and Pech (1976) also proposed an approach to L2 writing that resembled a version of process writing pedagogy in its emphasis on personal experience. “The experience approach” as they called it “is based on the belief that learning must be rooted in the experience of the learner in order for it to be effective” (p. 55). Like Zamel, Buckingham and Pech derived their perspective from L1 reading and writing instruction, arguing that “there is nothing inherent in the experience approach itself which limits its use to either native or non-native speakers” (p. 55).

Despite the existence of pedagogical practices that resemble process pedagogy throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s, however, the commonly held view is that process pedagogy began in the late 1970s, particularly with Zamel’s 1976 article in TESOL Quarterly (Krapels, 1990; Raimes, 1991). As Susser (1994) points out, “Zamel frequently is praised (or blamed) for introducing process writing to the ESL field in 1976” (p. 37). Although he also notes that the first explicit discussion of L1 process pedagogy did not appear until Kroll (1978), Zamel (1976) did contribute significantly to the development of L2 composing process research. This and subsequent contributions by McKay (1982), Raimes

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As we have seen, process became popular in the discourse practices of L2 writing research and scholarship, especially during the 1980s. Yet, it hardly reached the status of a paradigm; process pedagogy was by no means wholeheartedly embraced by all L2 writing teachers. On the contrary, the L2 process movement encountered strong resistance (e.g., Horowitz, 1986) as soon as some proponents of process pedagogy began to insist on a rigid formulation of the process approach. Although the term “process” became widely adopted by textbook authors and publishers, some proponents of L2 writing process pedagogy lamented that the textbooks did not necessarily incorporate process pedagogy in substantial ways (e.g., Raimes, 1986). Susser (1994) also writes that the acceptance of process pedagogy was not “universal,” pointing out that “many ESL/EFL methodology texts all but ignored process writing” (p. 38). Furthermore, L2 composing processes never became the only dominant focus of L2 writing research, as descriptive studies of L1 and L2 written discourse continued to be a viable research focus (Connor, 1987; Connor & Johns, 1990; Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Leki, 1991; Purves, 1988; Swales, 1990).

Recognizing the multiplicity of perspectives in L2 writing scholarship, Raimes (1991) described the historical progression not as a movement from one focus to another but the sequential emergence of competing foci: “Focus on Form 1966–”; “Focus on the Writer 1976–”; “Focus on Content 1986–”; and “Focus on the Reader 1986–” (pp. 408–413). In other words, while “process” became an influential keyword in second language writing, there never was an L2 writing process era in the sense that everyone wholeheartedly embraced the notion of process, or in which it was the paradigm for L2 writing.

What, then, does it mean to announce the arrival of the post-process era in L2 writing? How is post-process defined and for what purpose? What conception of process does it invoke? These are some of the questions that need to be considered as we continue to explore the implications of the term post-process for L2 writing theory, research, and instruction. Atkinson’s definition, which recognizes the continuation of many of the tenets of process pedagogy, seems congruent with Susser (1994), who argued that the notion of process is best defined not as a complete theory or a pedagogical approach but as a set of pedagogical practices that can be adapted to any pedagogical approaches. Post-process, then, is ultimately a misnomer, for it presupposes a certain conception of process and proclaims its end — after all, it literally means “after process.” Yet, I do not mean to suggest that we ban the term. Rather, my goal in this article was to show how such a term could mask the complexity of ideas to which it refers, and to caution against defining post-process as the complete rejection of all tenets of process pedagogy or theories. Instead, post-process might be more productively defined as the rejection of the dominance of process at the expense of other aspects of writing.
and writing instruction. If we can keep that definition in mind, the term may serve a useful heuristic purpose as the field of L2 writing moves toward the era of multiplicity.

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