

**Writing from the Self: Reflecting on the Role of
Creative Writing in the Academic Writing Classroom**
*Escribiendo desde el ser: Reflexionado acerca del rol de la escritura
creativa en el aula de escritura académica*

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Abstract

As academic writing teachers, we are often faced with the challenge of teaching writing as a system or emancipating from its structures. In this reflective paper, we begin by examining our own experiences with writing for academic and creative purposes using co/autoethnography as a method of self-reflection. In addition, we invited three modern language students at a public university in Tunja, Colombia to share their reflections about their writing processes and the role creative writing could play in the academic writing classroom. Our reflections were a first step in rethinking our classroom from a critical sociocultural model, which revealed that students' individual writing processes, motivation, feedback, and creative writing could help boost students' self-confidence when writing for academic purposes.

Key words: Academic writing, co/autoethnography, creative writing, critical sociocultural model.

Resumen

Como profesores de escritura académica, a menudo nos enfrentamos al desafío de enseñar a escribir como un sistema o emancipación de sus estructuras. En este artículo reflexivo, comenzamos por examinar nuestras propias experiencias con la escritura, con fines académicos y creativos, utilizando la co/auto-etnografía como método de autorreflexión. Además, invitamos a tres estudiantes de Idiomas Modernos de una universidad pública de Tunja- Colombia, a compartir sus reflexiones sobre sus procesos de escritura y el papel que la escritura creativa podría desempeñar en el aula de escritura académica. Nuestras reflexiones fueron un primer paso para repensar el aula de clase desde un modelo sociocultural crítico, el cual reveló que los procesos de escritura individuales, la motivación, la retroalimentación y la escritura creativa de los estudiantes podrían ayudar a aumentar la autoconfianza de los estudiantes cuando escriben con fines académicos.

Palabras clave: co/auto-etnografía, escritura académica, escritura creativa, modelo crítica sociocultural.

Introduction

I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say.

Flannery O' Connor

We begin with the quote above because we understand that writing is a social construction with experiences, identities, reflections, rules, positions, relationships, etc. More importantly, it is under constant transformation and negotiation by those who engage in writing. At the public university in Colombia where we work and study, time constraints and curriculum goals have limited the ability to explore writing from a sociocultural perspective in a foreign language. At the same time, we have also noticed that our students and peers lack the confidence to write in English. Of course, this leaves us with the choice of only teaching the writing structures or opening spaces to reflect and boost our students' confidence in writing.

In fact, Gómez (2011) explained a common issue that presents itself when teaching academic writing to Colombian

language learners. You either adopt the language and its structures without negotiation, or you encourage a complete removal from structure. For the most part, writing for academic purposes in Colombia is taught from the former perspective. Trigos-Carrillo (2019) also mentioned that studies related to academic writing in Latin America “usually aimed to diagnose students' ability to comprehend academic readings and write academic texts with an emphasis on structure, grammar, and formal aspects of language, in order to propose strategies to improve these skills” (p. 22). Nevertheless, only teaching the language structure may be detrimental for students who are learning to write in a foreign language. For example, Salamanca (2015) surveyed his students in an undergraduate language program at a Colombian public university. His students “argued that grammatical knowledge made writing in English a difficult task. They stated that English language rules limited their production and that grammar did not

allow them to pay attention to the development of their ideas” (p. 66). As teachers, we feel the struggle of having to pick one side or the other. If we emancipate from the rules and structures imposed by English academic writing, we might deny our students the ability to effectively participate as writers in academia. On the other hand, if we stick to the rules and structures, we may see a perpetuation of colonized practices that have marked academic writing in English.

Perhaps one of our greatest fears as teachers was that if we chose to teach only the structures of writing, we would be imposing the colonization of knowledge on our students. According to Walsh (2007), colonization of knowledge is “the chains established by structures and systems of power and colonial knowledge, which are maintained and reproduced by the institution of education. These institutions direct and organize the ways of thinking and seeing the world” (p. 27, trans.). If we focused primarily on imposing writing

structures, we would also be dictating how our students had to write, think, and organize their thoughts. Rather, we wanted to find a balance in which students could contribute, negotiate, and reflect on writing, while understanding the sociocultural and linguistic aspects that make up academic writing in English.

Co/autoethnography as a Method of Self-Reflection

Before setting out to find this balance, we return to the quote at the beginning of this paper. In order for us to make a transformation, we needed to understand ourselves first. Therefore, the following paper begins with a collection of our own poetry, personal narratives, and reflections on our experiences with academic writing. Though we recognize that this article is unconventional (i.e. lacking a question, theoretical framework or literature review, data analysis, results, conclusions, etc.), it represents our unique

style of researching, writing, and interpreting the world.

Therefore, we began by writing our experiences as they related to our own writing processes. While writing this paper, we read our narratives out loud and shared our experiences, which led to us to engage in a co/autoethnography. Co/autoethnography, as a method of analysis, involves the notion of “self-reflection in a collaborative setting” (Coia & Taylor, 2015, p. 9). In this sense, we sought to understand who we are as writers within a community and a sociopolitical context. As Coia and Taylor mentioned,

In telling our stories, we come to a deeper understanding of how we can be and who we might become. The very process of writing our experience informs our understanding of that experience, and our understanding is informed by other stories. (p. 4)

In sharing our stories and poems with each other, and our readers in the section that follows, we engage in a practice of insight and reflection. In other words, we make meaning from writing and sharing, rather than possessing that meaning to begin with. Based on using co/autoethnography as a method to analyze our writing experiences, we were able to discuss the key aspects that had motivated or discouraged us to write. Among these aspects, we found that we both shared a passion for creative writing. Even though creative and academic writing have different purposes, our ability to express ourselves through poems, stories, and tales helped us build our confidence as writers for academic purposes.

Finally, we asked three seventh semester modern language students at our university to join in on the conversation. As they are the population that we teach and communicate with every day, we thought it was necessary to include their voices on the role creative writing could play in the

academic writing classroom. It is worth mentioning that all three students were male. As we are female, their perspective as men who write for creative purposes helped enrich the conversation. We share all of these reflections as a first step toward developing a critical sociocultural model (Correa & Usma, 2013) for teaching and learning academic writing at our public university that challenges the colonization of knowledge.

Laura Camila's Experience: Away from Creative Writing

*Armoniosa felicidad donde
deslumbra un sol gigante,
del cielo caerá lluvia de sonrisas
intrigantes.
Mientras la fuerte brisa a nuestra
alma curará,
el azul del cielo con el mar
combinará.*

(Camila Salamanca, 2013)

Writing in my learning process has been focused on strict parameters and

specific topics, which have disregarded creativity and imagination at the time of writing. From primary school until the university, writing has been used for academic purposes. As a whole, Colombia has been characterized by low test scores in reading and writing, as evidenced in the state test results for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) or *Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior (ICFES)*.

The root of writing is focused on academic purposes at school. Due to this, the topics about writing were related to summary structures, chemistry and physics reports, and writing an essay with a beginning, middle, and end. Moreover, I did not see classic literature until eleventh grade, and its goal was to present expositions. Furthermore, I did not look at poetry until the university in some of my interdisciplinary classes, but I never wrote a poem for academic purposes. For these reasons, I have only had contact with academic writing for educational process,

and I have had very little experience with creative writing, classic literature, and poetry in my classes.

Therefore, it is important to see the context in which I was immersed. My languages teachers taught me to read and write, but they did not generate motivation neither by reading nor by writing. It is because languages teachers were focused on theory and grammar structures. They could not develop creativity in their students, even if they wanted to do it, because they had to follow a curriculum, which did not allow them to go beyond the limits and established topics. Thus, when the creativity is forgotten, the strict parameters fill the minds of the students.

ANADIPLOSIS

*Ansiosa espera de mil habitantes,
habitantes que sonrían en las noches de
corazón,
corazón que valiente suspira en la
mañana, mañana que abriga los recuerdos*

*congelados, congelados mis labios al
sentirte, sentir que se acaba la muerte, la
vida, la hora.*

*La hora infinita que llega en el día, día
cansado e intoxicado de memoria,
memoria traicionera, interesada e
inoportuna, inoportuna la llegada de tu
ausencia,
ausencia que huele a gritos de locura,
locura insaciable de tu nueva llegada.*

(Camila, 2017)

Despite the fact that my writing experience at school was not the best, my mother was my first support for starting to read. She gave me a big book with several Disney stories, which was the best gift of my childhood. Thanks to this book, I felt so motivated, and I started to create crazy tales based on my daily routine and objects around me. Thus, I started to immerse myself in the world of creative writing.

Some years ago, I discovered a passion for writing poems. I started writing for myself short love poems, which always had rhyme. It was not for any class at

school, but for the pleasure of expressing my feelings and playing with the words. I realized that writing through my feelings was a way to do catharsis and to be uninhibited, therefore, evading any negative form of life. It has always been a great help to keep calm in some moments of chaos and to develop my creativity as a writer.

At the moment, I continue writing poems in another way, that is to say, using literary figures. I decided to use them to comprehend this type of writing, its real concept, and to understand how pure poetry is created. Furthermore, there are no excuses to not write in a creative way, even when everything around you are strict written works. It is important to take into account that writing provides a freedom of expression from the writer. It is a constant search inside of the human being, crossing barriers. It is when that impossible becomes possible.

Anna's Experience: Finding Myself

Again

I used to spill juices, but somehow I've learned.

I used to climb trees, but now I get splinters on my knees.

I used to be a skinny stick, but now I'm more mature.

I used to get no homework at all, but now I get towers of it.

I used to have the chubbiest cheeks, but now they have disappeared.

(Anna, 2001)

I think my writing process started when I was five. I remember dancing around like a ballerina in my mom's library while listening to Yanni. I wanted to live the lifestyle of the great writers, and every day, I wrote mental scripts like the stories written by James Fenimore Cooper and Victor Hugo. Shortly after, I remember drawing and writing words around my paintings like "mami" and "dog". As I grew up, the reading and writing teacher focused on sentence structures and parts of speech.

Later on, I had to write essays for my social studies and English classes as early as fifth grade. Yet, it was not until sixth grade that I was asked to write my first poem. I recall writing that I was fat, and my teacher sent me to the psychologist. Fortunately, this did not push me away from writing, rather it taught me the art of accommodation and word choice since I had to erase and replace what was previously said. Going back to that first poem, I think I really left something there for myself for many years to come. You see, I had written what I was feeling at that moment, I was a Latina who grew up in middle-class white America, and I struggled to fit into their beauty standards. Though those words never made it in the final print copy, I still remember what and why I wrote it. This first poem became the starting point for many more poems to come, and more importantly, it fueled my desire to write as a way to document the world around me.

*I'd like to be smart,
but you don't have the heart
to care about what I say.*

*What about today?
I'd like to prove you wrong
and break the gender mold,
but I am in a straight jacket,
and my mind you have sold.*

(Anna, 2009)

Writing in college was like mixing oil and water. I witnessed what it was like to be excellent and terrible all at the same time. To explain, I was praised for my writing style in my humanities courses, which included Portuguese and English. I would get comments like “Who are you? Are you a graduate student?” However, my core classes in Environmental Science showed a different picture. I remember vividly when I handed in a behavioral science essay on apes and chimpanzees with a hook that said, “Maybe one day we will witness the Planet of the Apes”. To this day I recall the teacher’s comment, “This is science, not science fiction”. In

my college years, I started to create a misconception on who could write and for what purposes. Sadly, research was prioritized and validated based on gender and last name. So, papers from other parts of the world were quickly discarded as inferior knowledge. The same was true for research done by female authors. Simply put, I felt like there was no place in science for writers like me. Today, I am finding new ways to marry my creative side with my inner researcher as a way to express who I truly am as a writer and person. So, as I tell everyone who asks, I feel like I found myself again.

Putting the Pieces Together

After reflecting on our own writing processes, we shared our stories and looked at how particular events had marked us as writers. We discussed similarities in our experiences, which are listed below:

1. There are no two paths alike; everyone has their

own story when it comes to writing.

2. Writing was influenced by our social interactions with others and the context.
3. Writing creative works and poetry helped us internalize features of the language and reflect about life.

Each idea will be explained below with reference to our experiences and the literature.

There are no two paths alike; everyone has their own story when it comes to writing. The first takeaway from our reflection was that our writing processes were distinct. Each process shaped and was shaped by the writer. Despite similarities in the beginning and final outcomes of writing, the paths are winding. This seemed contradictory to the way we had been taught to write. For example, we often heard of a process approach that includes a prewriting,

drafting, editing, and a final production stage among other stages (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Meriwether, 1997; Williams, 2003). Yet, what we noticed was that the writing process in a foreign language may begin even before learning the language itself. The act of writing has a background of individual beliefs, reflections, and predispositions shaped by culture: language, gender, status, age, social interactions, context, politics, economics, and other factors (Nieto, 1992). Each one of these factors make the writing process unique and can create difficulties in adopting structured writing model.

In 1984, Jensen and DiTiberio asked themselves “how can we teach a classroom full of individuals, each of whom needs to approach the process of writing in his or her own way?” (p. 285). They believed that the most appropriate method would be to understand the individual’s writing process to better guide them in their writing outcomes.

Personality was one of the factors studied

by Jensen and DiTiberio, although their notion of teaching for an individualized writing process can be compared to today’s use of learning strategies to acquire a language. All in all, they suggested that students should vary their writing with preferred and nonpreferred methods, with the latter being left toward the end of the process to ease comfort in writing. Shifting away from teaching only one writing process could reduce anxiety in creating a final product.

In more recent research, Sieben (2018) talked about the idea of a Writing Hope Framework, in which students write about their goals in life and school. Her framework is meant to interconnect the cognitive aspect of writing, which can be associated to a structured writing process, with an affective/motivational aspect. In this case, the motivational part of writing provides feedback to the cognitive process. The author pointed out that the language that teachers use to approach writing with

their students is also influential. According to Sieben (2018),

the Writing Hope Framework provides a language that is strengths-based, action-driven, and student-centered, and teachers and students have shared that the discourse of writing hope is motivating and instructional and guides them through a nonlinear process of writing that takes into account their unique voices as writers and thinkers in the world, not just in their classrooms. (para. 25)

One essential aspect to note about this framework, as is common with other studies on individual writing processes, is that it is “student-centered” and “action-driven”. In other words, the students’ backgrounds are considered as sources of knowledge to teach and learn writing. Furthermore, writing has a transformative purpose, whether it is to encourage the

individual or ultimately change society for the better.

Writing was influenced by social interactions with others and the context.

The role of feedback has been often been studied in language learning and writing. Alvira (2016) wrote that “feedback on writing is a tool to enhance writing because it increases autonomy and also leads to scaffolding and this improvement can be evidenced in improved motivation and grammar, paragraph structure, coherence, and cohesion” (p. 89). However, negative feedback can also impact students’ perspectives of themselves as writers. For Anna, her belief that she could not write in the sciences came directly from her teacher’s comment. For Camila, her teachers failed to properly instruct or motivate her to write in Spanish or English. Though our stories were different, we could see that our social interactions with others affected the way we saw writing and ourselves.

This connects to the idea of writing as a sociocultural practice. According to Vygotsky (as cited in Valsiner, 1987, p. 67), a child has two stages of cultural development known as interpsychology and intrapsychology. Interpsychology is based on our interactions with others, while intrapsychology is the individual internalization of concepts. Social interactions in both of our cases were carried out with our mothers, schoolteachers, and classmates. In the interpsychology stage, we point out the role teachers have in the classroom to motivate students with positive feedback on their writing. Meanwhile, the intrapsychology stage could be accompanied with creative writing. For us, poetry was an internal practice that became an outlet to internalize both features of the language and our understanding of the world.

Creative writing and poetry helped us internalize features of the language and reflect about life. Creative

writing and academic writing are treated like oil and water in our academic context. They are always being separated by students and teachers, with academic writing assuming a more important role in academia. For most undergraduate students at our university, creative writing is not part of their core classes. Thus, if any creative writing is to be done, it will most likely take place in the English classroom. However, a focus on spoken communication rather than written prose has diminished creative writing to a personal practice best done at home.

We both picked up creative writing at some point in our writing process. For Anna, her sixth-grade schoolteacher encouraged writing poetry as a final assignment. For Camila, creative writing was motivated by a desire to express her feelings and use rhyme. Nonetheless, creative writing for both of us has extended beyond those initial motivations. It has become a way to release negative energy and reflect upon our lives.

Creative writing could be an outlet to release negativity, stress, and painful situations. In fact, creative writing has been studied among patients who write about traumatic changes and deterioration to their health. In a study done by Smyth and Lepore (2002), expressive writing helped 70 asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients get better and reduce their illness in comparison to 30 control patients (as cited in Murray, 2012). However, Lutgendorf warned that, “You need focused thought as well as emotions. An individual needs to find meaning in a traumatic memory as well as to feel the related emotions to reap positive benefits from the writing exercise” (Murray, 2012). So, for creative writing to be beneficial to the writer, a reflective process also needs to take part in the description of events.

Undeniably, reflection should be part of any writing assignment, even after the final product has been submitted. Creative writing invites the writer to carry out that reflection process from within,

which leads to the internalization of language and thought. According to Dewey (1916), reflection “is the discernment of the relation between what we try to do and what happens in consequence. No experience having a meaning is possible without some element of thought” (p. 150). The process of finding cause and effect in our actions is the essence of evaluating problems and creating solutions. Therefore, creative writing also promotes the individual process of critical thinking.

Finally, we saw that creative writing was a way for us to internalize the language and practice accommodation through word choice. In learning a second language, creative writing can enhance the use of descriptive language, active verbs, and transitions for causality. From our experiences in the classroom, creative writing can help first time English writers open up in a second language without the fear of structures and grammatical rules. As one Biology undergraduate student in

our academic writing course remarked, “It was much easier to begin writing about something that we were familiar with” (RaEn, Interview).

Our reflections helped us understand more about teaching academic writing in English. First, our students have individual writing processes that have been influenced by their culture and context. Second, the cognitive aspect of the writing process can be complemented with motivational aspects. Doing so allows the writer to become familiarized with writing. Third, social interactions influence the writing process, and positive feedback can boost students’ self-confidence. In terms of the interpsychology, creative writing can aid in understanding feelings and approaching the language.

For the next part of this article, we chose to focus on students’ perceptions on the role creative writing could have in the academic writing classroom. In the

following section, three modern languages majors at our university shared their poems and reflections with us.

Agonía: David’s Reflections

¡Golpéame fuerte, madero; porque estoy muriendo!
¡Golpéame madero ingrato, golpéame y despierto!
¡Leña pura de abeto desteñado, golpea mi alma, golpea mis sesos!
¡Rocío de la aurora, penetra mi alma!
¡Lávame, rocío porque muero de tristeza!
¡Apaga la llama que encendió en mí!
¡Noche de espanto que de amor morí!
¡Vuelve a mí, madero!
¡Qué te necesito!
¡Vuelve que te anhele!
¡Vuelve que me muero!

(David Martínez¹, 2018)

David Martinez, a seventh semester modern languages student, began by stating his writing process. He mentioned the following,

Mi proceso escritural ha sido bastante autodidacta. Empecé alrededor hace 4 o 5 años, un día que me di cuenta que había escrito un poema muy bonito. Entonces desde allí me di cuenta que tenía gusto por la palabra y que también me servía como una catarsis para poder explorar todas las emociones que en ese momento me

¹ The names that appear in this section are pseudonyms chosen by the participants, who signed

a consent and release form for their creative work (see Annex 1).

tenían confundido. Entonces por eso empecé a escribir, igual no lo hice pensando en las reglas gramaticales, sintácticas o ortográficas. Si no simplemente los hice como una catarsis para poder liberarme. Y me di cuenta que la mejor forma de escribir es desde el corazón y con sus emociones.

[My writing process has been a bit autodidactic. I started about 4 to 5 years ago. One day I realized I had written a very nice poem. So, from there I realized that I had a taste for the word, and it also served as a catharsis in order to explore all of my emotions that at the moment had me confused. So, that is why I started to write, I did not do it thinking about grammar, syntax, or spelling rules. Rather, simply, I did it as a catharsis to free myself. And I noticed that the best way to write is from the heart and with your emotions]. (David Martinez, Interview)

According to David, the writing process can begin even outside of the classroom. In his case, he started writing poems about four years ago to deal with his emotions. For him, it was not important to follow strict rules, but to write from the heart. Later, he discussed the differences between academic and creative writing. In the interview, he provided examples of what should be taught for each one. For example, academic writing should be

related to paragraph structure, concise vocabulary, and investigation research. On the other hand, creative writing should be more focused on what the authors want to express. He mentioned,

Darles como las pautas. El ejercicio... para que sea correcto, o sea darles como tipcitos mínimos para que no estén haciendo las cosas mal. Pero, sin embargo, que no sea todo muy técnico, sino que se dé el espacio para la conducta, para que se construyan unos a otros a partir de esas experiencias escriturales.

[Give them (students) rules. The assignment...so that it can be correct, in other words, give them some tips so that they do not do things wrong. But, nonetheless, it shouldn't be so technical, rather a space should be given to act, so that they can construct from each other based on those writing experiences]. (David Martinez, Interview)

David Martinez mentioned that an academic writing course should have tips on how to improve writing. However, he believed that it should not be so technical. Rather, students should be given a space to practice and co-create writing based on the writing experience. David Martinez concluded by saying that creative writing

should have a place in academic writing. According to him, discourse analysis, article publication, literary works, and investigation are linked to creative writing. Furthermore, he stated that, “*Sí, porque la escritura creativa denota mucho la cognición del escritor. Como este percibe el mundo, como lo abstrae y como lo expresa.* [Yes, creative writing greatly implies the writer’s cognition. How the author perceives the world, separates it, and expresses it].” In this case, we noticed that David connected the cognitive aspect of writing with the creative side, which was similar to our reflections on the individual writing process.

Renacer: Kaman’s Reflections

Rompí los esquemas, los dilemas que planté ayer

Quebré mis ideas y borré las líneas de mis ojos de papel

No quiero mirar atrás, quiero dejar de pensar

Cubrí con la sábana de mis entrañas las marañas de lo que pasé ayer

Olvidé los recuerdos y replanteé todo en un momento adverso

Dejé de vivir de instantes, lo siento, pero ya era tiempo de rehacer

No quiero recordar la soledad, quiero dejar de pensar

Quemaré todas las odas que le escribí a la vida y voy a renacer

En mi ayer, no me hallé, y busqué: excusas dementes

Y perdí la razón, y de repente alquilé el corazón

Así me senté sin sentido, a pensar en el olvido y recordar que estuve perdido

Caminé, buscando la dirección y el apartamento donde residía el amor

Encontré la razón, para dejarlo todo:

Eras tú y tu pincel rojo y...redibujaste mis ojos de papel.

(Kaman, 2009)

Kaman is also a seventh semester modern languages student. He shared his writing process below,

Como tal no he estudiado sobre la escritura, como escribir. No he tenido como ese tipo de educación. Y de hecho siempre he tratado como de evitarlo. Tengo varios libros para aprender a escribir, pero a ninguno le he trabajado. Y yo creo que es como a partir de las experiencias uno empieza escribir, pues en mi caso es así. Lo que siento lo escribo. De hecho, muchas veces no se entienden por lo mismo. Porque no todos sentimos igual.

[I haven't studied writing or how to write. Nor have I had that type of education. In fact, I have always tried to avoid it. I have various books about learning how to write, but I haven't worked on any. I believe that from experiences one learns to write, in my case it was like that. What I feel, I write. As a matter of fact, that is why you cannot understand what I write because of that. Because we don't all feel the same]. (Kaman, Interview)

We noticed that Kaman labeled himself as a “self-taught” writer. Despite having books on writing, he has taken up the practice through experience. In fact, he is inspired by writing about his emotions and, in a way, being understood is not his priority. Kaman highlighted that each person is different. This has implications in the way we teach writing because a book might fail to inspire the student writer, as was the case with Kaman. Also, Kaman talked about an experience of writing that leads to learning. Experiential learning would encompass not just learning how to write, but also how to reflect, feel, and express one's self. In this

sense, Kaman added to his definition of creative writing as,

una creación original que representa un pensamiento o un sentimiento. Ya sea no solo en la ficción, por ejemplo, en un cuento, un microcuento o un poema, sino también en lo académico. Yo creo que también la escritura creativa se ve como un proceso original en la escritura, digamos en los artículos científicos y en todas esas cuestiones académicas.

[an original creation that represents thought and feeling. It can either be fiction, for example a story, a short story, or a poem. In the academic sense, I believe that creative writing can be seen as an original process of writing like in a scientific article and in all of those academic aspects]. (Kaman, Interview)

In this case, Kaman pointed out that creative writing is original, unique, and thought provoking. As he was describing creative writing, he made the link between creative writing and academic writing. Thus, process and originality are part of both types of writing. In this sense, creative writing could help the writer express him or herself in academic writing and vice versa. Kaman added that creative writing does play a role in academic writing,

porque todo proceso de creación primero necesita investigación, es decir todo proceso de creación es un proceso de investigación que se materializa. Y tiene que ser un proceso original.

[because every creative process first needs investigation, in other words, the process of creating is an investigative process that materializes itself. And it has to be original]. (Kaman, Interview)

To conclude, Kaman pointed out several times the idea of “originality”. Originality is a key component to writing any piece, whether it is for creative or academic purposes. The idea of originality can be seen from the individual writing process to each person’s unique writing style. Despite having to follow strict rules in academic writing, the originality should still remain in the writer’s voice.

Stand-by: José’s Reflections

*Ahora, tu cuerpo frágil está encima
y puedo sentir chorrear tu suave
almizcle sobre mí. Me bañas en tu
esencia como los capullos se lo
hacen, moribundos, a la incipiente
pradera. Te derramas, te viertes, te*

*disuelves en todo lo que soy; y hoy
me siento más llena de ti. Esa
esencia amarga que parecías
haberte bien guardado en un
frasco, albergará la dulce
remembranza de nuestro ocaso.*

(José Ibáñez, 2018)

José Ibáñez is a seventh semester in Modern Languages. His career emphasis is in Spanish. During the interview, he mentioned the following,

En general, no he tenido un proceso como tal para escribir. Yo simplemente escribo en el sentido de que yo no escribo para otras personas sino para mí. Entonces, como tal, viene una catarsis allí en la forma de escribir, aunque no sé, creo que es Borges o Cortázar los que dicen, que la escritura no necesariamente tiene una catarsis, pero para mí sí. Sí es una catarsis. Mi proceso es más como exteriorizar el mundo interior que está acá.

[In general, I haven’t had a process to write. I simply write in the sense that I don’t write for other people but for me. So, as such, it comes a catharsis in the way to write, although I don’t know, I believe that it was Borges or Cortázar who said that writing does not necessarily have a catharsis, but for me it does. It is a catharsis. My process is more like exteriorizing the inside world that is here]. (José Ibáñez, Personal interview)

José Ibáñez shared that writing has played a large role in his life. He writes to do a catharsis with himself, but he does not share his writing. However, the most important things for him is the value that writing has as a way to project everything that he feels and thinks. Moreover, he made a division between academic and creative writing. The first, for him, is a way to write correctly. The second focused on senses and feelings. Thus, he added another aspect about what creative writing represented for him,

...tiene por objetivo más que todo un sentido estético y un sentido del deleite. En el sentido estético, pues que no se va a interesar por lo que son los signos de puntuación. Si no el mero fluir de las palabras...Y en el sentido del deleite, pues prácticamente cuando uno exterioriza sus emociones, pues lo que hace es disfrutar de eso mismo. Tener placer al saber que uno puede plasmar ciertas emociones, que en el habla cotidiana no se puede.

[...its objective, more than anything, is an aesthetic and pleasurable sense. In the aesthetic sense, it does not care for punctuation symbols, but, in the fluidity of words....And in the pleasurable sense. It is practically when one exteriorizes one's feelings. Well, what it does is

enjoy one's self. It is pleasurable knowing that one can leave certain emotions that one can talk about in everyday speech]. (José Ibáñez, Personal interview).

According to José, creative writing aimed to explore and enjoy all of ourselves. We can delight in our words and allow ourselves to extract our emotions in a positive way. In addition, he reflected on the role that creative writing played in academic writing,

Creo que si tiene algún lugar, pero un lugar muy pequeño por decirlo así. Creo que tiene lugar en el sentido de que puede tomar más experiencia a la hora de escribir. Pero que sea necesaria para escribir algo académico, no creo que sea tan necesaria.

[I believe that it has some place, but a very small place to say it like that. I consider that it has a place in the sense that it can provide more experience when writing. Whether it is necessary to write something academic, I don't think that it is so necessary]. (José Ibáñez, Personal interview).

José concluded that creative and academic writing are two different processes that are carried out in different ways. For José, creative writing can provide experience in writing, but it is not

necessary for academic writing. However, it is noteworthy that José mentioned experience as part of the writing process. Once again, we see the importance of experiential learning in the writing process. It is possible to gain experience writing whether it is academically or creatively; it does not matter which one we start with.

Toward a Critical Sociocultural Model

Part of the initial issue we had with teaching academic writing was imposing foreign language structures and rules without providing our students with the opportunity to reflect or negotiate the language. Teaching writing in this way would fall under a bureaucratic, rationalist, or traditional model. According to Correa and Usma (2013), “under this model decisions are made by the top of the organization, ignoring historical antecedents and evolving conditions, and the inclusion and exclusion patterns that take place in the process” (p. 228). On the

other hand, Correa and Usma proposed a critical socio-cultural model to policy making and language teaching that proved to be useful in rethinking the academic writing classroom.

According to the authors, the different “stakeholders” involved in the language learning-teaching process should participate, discuss, and make decisions together. Additionally, the critical sociocultural model is a bottom-up, student-centered approach. In other words, the context of the classroom and its participants (teachers and students) determine the content, methodologies, and practices that “fit their realities” (p. 233). As was the focus of this paper, we first wrote about our experience. Then, we analyzed and reflected together on the similarities in our writing process. Then, we interviewed language students to understand their reflections in regard to the role of creative writing in the academic writing classroom. Thereby, we

were able to reflect on writing and its process as a community with a specific context and history.

Based on the students' and our reflections, we propose the following considerations for our academic writing class:

1. Consider each students' individual writing process before introducing a cognitive model.
2. Integrate a motivational or affective aspect to cognitive processes.
3. Provide positive feedback during the writing process.
4. Ask students to pick out their own learning material for writing.
5. Utilize creative writing to move from familiar to less familiar aspects of writing, as well as build self-confidence and emotional support.

Reflecting on our own experiences and that of our students was the first step in discovering that creative writing, along with support and attention to students' individual differences, could be an avenue to build our students' self confidence in academic writing. Likewise, in order to strengthen students' writing ability, the educational field must take into account creative writing from the beginning of the educational learning process. As Randolph (2011) mentioned, "students gained confidence in their writing and consequently became better writers, manipulating the tools they acquired to produce stronger and more controlled writing" (p. 73). In that way, students will be more skillful when writing for creative or academic purposes because they will have developed their creativity, innovation, and confidence along the way.

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