



Measuring Writing Engagement and Emotional Tone in L2 Creative Writing: Implications for Interdisciplinarity

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Xiaomei: Your dad and grandma went to the hospital to get you while I was waiting at your Uncle's. When they came back, I took a look at you and thought, This is not my baby!

Atiya: I am abnormal. I knew that from my classmates' eyes, from the cold chair and desk, from the curses I over heard, from my teacher's mocking and satire and even from the people who rather walk further to avoid an eye contact with me. I knew that from every hour, minute and second.

The above excerpts came from two second-language (L2) writers, both referred to with pseudonyms. These writers were responding anonymously to two email-distributed creative writing prompts. In the first excerpt, Xiaomei has fictionalized the retelling of a story that her family or friends always told about her. In the second excerpt, Atiya has taken on the point of view of a marginalized member of her home society to fictionalize a typical day for that person. These creative writing prompts helped to measure if prompts guided by two different writing-studies theories produced different levels of narrative-writing engagement. These prompts also helped to measure if the writing resulting from these prompts reflected different emotional tones. The importance of this study for the field of creative writing is twofold. This study represents one step forward in exploring which theories used in writing instruction may offer students the most engaging creative writing experiences. In addition to addressing a theoretical issue, this study aims to address a related practical issue by giving advocates of creative writing studies empirical evidence to support arguments for creative writing across the curriculum in higher education.

Such creative writing activities as the ones I used in my study are not new to creative writing instruction. Creative writing teachers have long used invention prompts to get student writers "in motion" (Bishop 69). Wendy Bishop spent a sizeable amount of space in her seminal *Released Into Language* describing invention activities. Among those are what Bishop called the "guided portrait," in which writers are asked to build a descriptive paragraph about "someone they know or knew and have strong feelings about" (98), as well as the prompt Bishop entitled "Autobiography—Past, Present, Future,"

in which students are asked to fictionalize past, present, and future events of their lives, “to move the self (as a character) through time” (103-104). Likewise, John Gardner in *The Art of Fiction* offered a number of writing activities for practicing perspective taking, such as a prompt to describe a barn from the point of view of a father who lost his son (36). My argument here is that the field of creative writing will benefit from knowing more about what such prompts are doing exactly. Do some prompts work differently in different situations for different students? Might some kinds of prompt be expected, based on empirical precedent, to appeal to students in special ways more reliably than others?

Wendy Bishop long held the position that creative writing teachers, implicated in theory and pedagogy, should be aware and responsive to theoretical innovation and change in adjacent fields, including fields of composition and linguistics (xix). Also speaking on this issue, Vandermeulen noted that “Pedagogy helps teachers to become spectators of their forms of participation in their students’ learning. Pedagogy provides terms for naming what [creative writing teachers] do and perspectives for seeing ourselves and our teaching” (9). The call for theory- and evidence-guided instruction in creative writing, though not new, may be experiencing a renewal. While Mayers called on supporters of creative writing studies to “advocate the interdisciplinary value of creative writing” (4), Hergenrader spoke on the possible benefits of such advocating: The chance creative writing has for integrating with a broader educational effort in higher education relies in part by making “creative writing research central, rather than peripheral, to our discipline” (9). For Hergenrader, proponents of creative writing may be tasked with explaining what creative writing offers students that, for instance, literature and composition studies cannot. In such cases, Hergenrader has argued, creative writing advocates need to be better able to articulate the value that creative writing classes and experiences offer. Prerequisite to this articulation is systematic analysis of experiences and the writing resulting from creative writing praxis.

Such analysis is under way in what might be referred to as L2 creative writing, meaning research into ways creative writing has interplay with language learning and can be, and is being, employed in language classrooms. Empirical studies of L2 creative writing have suggested numerous benefits for learners. These benefits include creative writing nurturing perspective-taking (Stillar); having literacy-transfer potential to academic writing (Iida, “The Value of Poetry Writing”); being connected to the establishment of unique voice (Hanauer, “Measuring Voice”; Iida, “Developing Voice”; Maxim; Spiro and Dymoke); prompting empowering identity negotiation (Garvin; Simpson; Zhao, “L2 Creative Writers’ Identities,” *Second Language Creative Writers*; Zhao and Brown); raising awareness of a language’s semiotic power (Cahnmann-Taylor et al.; Chamcharatsri; Pardo); being a generally positive experience (Hanauer and Liao); and representing motivating classroom activity (Chamcharatsri; Garvin; Hanauer, *Poetry as Research*; Iida, “The Value of Poetry Writing”). In short, empirical exploration has established that L2 creative writing represents engaging and rewarding classroom activity. The present study looks to build on this body of work by measuring which kinds of creative writing assignments may be more or uniquely engaging. Though arguments and anecdotal positions may be plentiful, this is something the field of creative writing has yet to quantify.

STUDY DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether L2 writers who enjoy creative writing in English feel different levels of narrative-writing engagement while writing in response to two different creative writing prompts. The first prompt is designed to put into action Hanauer's meaningful-literacy instruction approach ("Meaningful Literacy," *Poetry as Research*). In response to language-teaching approaches that have traditionally offered students only intellectual exercises without giving chances for contextualized language use, Hanauer (2012) argues that language teachers should "find a way to make language learning a personally contextualized, meaningful activity for the learner" ("Meaningful Literacy" 106). Hanauer's approach is based on the assumption, with early and convincing empirical support already, that language use becomes meaningful when it allows a person to reconstruct his or her past through the language and conventions of literary genres. This kind of prompt has been used in creative writing praxis. See, for instance, Bishop's prompt "Autobiography—Past, Present, Future," in which students are asked to fictionalize past, present, and future events of their lives, "to move the self (as a character) through time" (103-104). Resembling creative nonfiction, such prompts can ultimately be expected to place learners' creative reconstructions of their selves at the center of the creative writing experience. In this study, I will refer to the writing that results from this prompt as autobiographical creative writing.

The second prompt used in this study is a version of Stillar's critical consciousness-raising prompt, which he used in a study that asked English-language learners in Japan to embody and fictionalize the points of view of marginalized or vilified members of Japanese society. I will refer to this kind of creative writing as critical consciousness-raising. This kind of perspective-taking prompt also has been used in creative writing and, for instance, may resemble a variation of Gardner's prompt to describe a barn from the point of view of a father who lost his son (36). Stillar's prompt itself operationalizes Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. In highlighting the importance of perception of a person's life situation, Freire argued that "In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (49). Perception, then, is prerequisite to liberation, and in all cases, "Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture" (Freire 49). Stillar's prompt is based on the assumption that not only simple engagement with issues of marginalization but importantly fictive embodiment of oppressed people in one's society (of which the writer may very well be a member) may lead to perception of the oppressive situation, with this perception being prerequisite to possible social transformation.

So far, studies have looked into the experience of reading literary texts about marginalized others to measure if engagement with such texts causes certain effects in the reader, such as an increase in empathy with the perceived other. For instance, Johnson carried out a study to see if transportation (or the feeling of being pulled into a fictional world while reading) impacted feelings of empathy for

marginalized people. Johnson asked participants to read a 7-page excerpt from Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams*, which fictionalizes "an educated and strong-willed Muslim woman who is assaulted in a New York City subway station" (81). Immediately after reading the passage, participants rated "how much empathy they felt toward Arab-Muslims as a group" (Johnson 81). As a result of analysis of the data, Johnson found that "transportation into a story portraying a counter-stereotypical protagonist is associated with prejudice reduction toward that out-group" (83). While Johnson's study offers a convincing first step in concluding that engagement with texts about perceived marginalized others has powerful and transformative effects on readers, research is lacking into what effects creative writing may have on the writer. It is worth noting that, too, past research has suggested that at least fiction writers are no better at perspective taking than people who do not regularly write fiction: Bischoff and Peskin carried out two studies, one which involved a survey to 100 people asking them to rate perceived perspective-taking ability by career, and a second that compared the perspective-taking abilities of two groups of writers and one group of non-writers. The two groups of writers were defined as established and intermediate, defined as follows:

Established writers were those who had published a book of fiction via an independent publishing house. Intermediate writers were those currently enrolled in a fiction writing class; or who had published fiction in a journal, magazine, anthology etc. or who had published via online or self-publishing channels. (Bischoff and Peskin 132)

The control group was defined as "participants [who] did not write creatively in any format, and had written an average of less than three hours of fiction per year of their literate life" (Bischoff and Peskin 132). To measure perspective taking, all participants completed three validated measures. Results of these studies indicated that, although people commonly believe fiction writers "are better at identifying/inferring the mental states of others compared to individuals who do not write fiction" (138), actually the evidence we have shows that writers and non-writers do not differ in measured ability to take on others' perspectives. What this seems to mean is that established and intermediate fiction writers may have a level of adeptness in ushering the conventions and modes of fiction to depict people's points of view, but this adeptness does not alone confer superior perspective-taking compared with non-writers. In the present study, then, no empirical research exists to justify my assumption that a person's ability to take on the perspective of a marginalized member of society, or of a family member, would impact how engaged they felt while writing.

Ultimately, while earlier empirical research and theoretical arguments allow that the experiences of these two kinds of writing differ, and while creative writing research has concluded that creative writing represents motivating and engaging classroom activity overall (e.g., Chamcharatrsi; Garvin; Hanauer, *Poetry as Research*; Iida, "The Value of Poetry Writing"), it is not known whether one kind of writing may engage student creative writers at different levels. It is also not known whether unique features result from these different creative writing experiences in the writing itself.

To build on earlier studies, I took the following steps in carrying out this study:

1. Upon receiving Internal Review Board approval, I had the director of international studies at one Midwestern U.S. public university email an invitation to participate to all international students studying in any discipline at that university. The invitational email invited students who enjoyed or were interested in writing creatively in English to click a hyperlink to a Qualtrics survey. The survey fully described the study's aims, ensured anonymity, and indicated that no particular risks were anticipated. Students gave anonymous informed consent by clicking a "consent" option, which advanced them to the next section of the survey.

2. The survey presented two writing prompts in random order. The prompts directed participants to write short works of imaginative fiction as clearly as possible. Each prompt was followed by three randomly ordered survey items that asked participants to rate on a 7-point scale how much engagement they felt while writing.

3. I ran appropriate statistical analyses of difference on post-writing survey items and on the numbers resulting from analysis of the participants' writing. Text-analysis software (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count, or LIWC pronounced "Luke") was used to explore the writing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two research questions directed my investigation:

Research Question 1: Do L2 writers who enjoy creative writing in English feel different levels of narrative-writing engagement between autobiographical and critical consciousness-raising creative writing?

Research Question 2: Does autobiographical creative writing evoke a different emotional tone from critical consciousness-raising creative writing?

PARTICIPANTS

Thirty participants finished the survey. Regarding gender, 20 identified as female, and 10 identified as male. Regarding age, 16 reported being between 18-24, 11 reported being between 25-34, and 3 reported being between 35-44. While 15 participants reported enjoying creative writing in English "A Lot," 12 reported enjoying it "Some," and 3 reported enjoying it "A Little." No participant selected "None." Participants reported using the following mother tongues and additional languages: Arabic, English, German, Kannada, Malayalam, Mandarin, Russian, and Taiwanese.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument used in this study underwent a four-stage validity plan to ensure content validity, comprehensibility, construct validity, and internal-consistency reliability (Litwin). I operationalized the concept of narrative-writing engagement by modeling items in my survey after Busselle and Bilandzic's survey for narrative (reading/viewing) engagement ("Measuring"). After I carried out a focused literature review of narrative engagement and related concepts (Banerjee and Greene; Busselle and Bilandzic, "Fictionality," "Measuring"; Cho et al.; Csikszentmihalyi; De Graaf et al.; Green; Green and Brock; Green and Clark; Johnson), the survey items were workshopped with an expert panel of researchers studying composition and applied linguistics at the doctoral level to ensure the survey items reflected the domain.

Additional validation happened as I selected and finalized writing prompts that reflected writing I expected to capture in my study (content validity). The first creative writing prompt reflects a meaningful-literacy instruction prompt (Hanauer, "Meaningful Literacy"), which has been used in studies to encourage writers to reconstruct autobiographical moments in their lives in creative literary writing. The second prompt comes from Stillar's study, which attempted to raise students' critical consciousness through fiction writing. In the study, Japanese learners of English studying in a creative writing class had to compose a "journal entry or personal letter from the perspective of an individual belonging to a marginalized or vilified group in their culture" (Stillar 166). Since both prompts used in my study come from scholars who have published research in L2 creative writing, as well as from literature that operationalized philosophical and theoretical stances in specific creative writing prompts, the prompts used in the study establish meaningful links to existing literature. The developed prompts read as follow:

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PROMPT

Think of a story that someone who is very important in your life likes to tell about you. Put yourself inside that person's mind. Use that person's words and voice to write the story as briefly and clearly as possible. For example, the story can be a family member talking about you.

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING PROMPT

Think of a person in your home community who is unfairly treated because of economic, racial, cultural, religious background, or another reason. Put yourself inside that person's mind. Use that person's words and voice to write a story as briefly and clearly as possible about a typical day for that person.

Through piloting of the survey, I attempted to ensure comprehensibility and construct validity of the instrument. I gave the instrument to a representative sample of English language learners. The

instrument that resulted from content, comprehensibility, and construct validity included 3 items that asked about emotional engagement (“The story that I wrote affected me emotionally”), attentional focus (“While I was writing my story, I found myself thinking about other things that were unrelated to the story”), and narrative presence, or the feeling of being there in the world the writer was creating (“At times while I was writing the story, the story world was closer to me than the real world”). Internal-consistency reliability was measured with a Cronbach’s coefficient alpha statistic for the items related to narrative-writing engagement. The result was an alpha ($\alpha = .60$) within an acceptable range for exploratory research (Nunnally).

LINGUISTIC INQUIRY AND WORD COUNT (LIWC)

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is a computerized text-analysis program that counts and categorizes words in psychology-relevant categories (Tausczik and Pennebaker). LIWC has been linked to hundreds of studies and undergone extensive validation efforts, including a word-collection phase, a base-rate analysis phase for word frequency, a refinement phase in which expert judges repeated all previous steps, and almost a decade of updates and expansions of the program’s processing ability and dictionary sensitivity (Pennebaker et al.).

DATA ANALYSIS

For the first research question, I checked engagement-survey data for core assumptions and ran paired-samples t-tests for normally distributed data and Mann-Whitney U tests for non-normally distributed data. Figure 1 summarizes the analytical procedure that I used to answer the first research question: Do L2 writers who enjoy creative writing in English feel different levels of narrative-writing engagement between autobiographical and critical consciousness-raising creative writing?

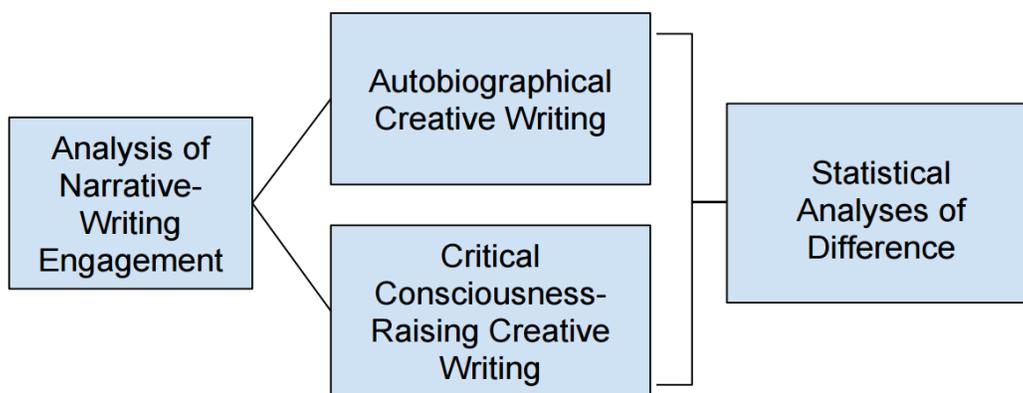


Figure 1. Schematic outline of data analysis process for the study of narrative-writing engagement.

For the second research question, I entered and analyzed short-story data using LIWC2015. Next, after checking LIWC data for core assumptions, I ran paired-samples t-tests for normally distributed data and Mann-Whitney U tests for non-normally distributed data. Figure 2 summarizes the analytical procedure that I used to answer the second research question: Does autobiographical creative writing evoke a different emotional tone from critical consciousness-raising creative writing?

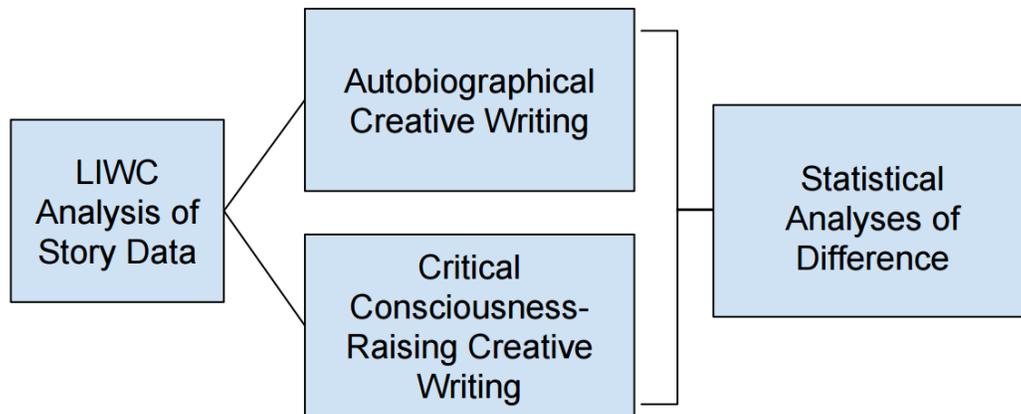


Figure 2. Schematic outline of data analysis process for the study of psychological processes in creative writing data.

RESULTS: THE STORIES

In this section, I present three sets of stories resulting from the study. Following the presentation of stories, I will present statistical and text-analysis software data and analysis.

For context, the average amount of time participants spent in responding to both prompts was approximately 40 minutes (SD = 21 minutes). The maximum amount of time used was 1 hour and 44 minutes while the minimum used was 10 minutes and 48 seconds. Participants were free to use as much time as they wanted. To see if the amount of time writing played a role in how engaged the writers reported feeling, I separated those writers who had spent more than 40 minutes writing (15 writers in total) from those who had spent less than 40 (15 writers in total) and, based on paired samples t-tests for normally distributed overall engagement data and Mann-Whitney U tests for non-normally distributed individual survey item data, found no statistically significant difference in how engaged writers reported feeling based on amount of time they spent writing. I next separated those writers who had spent more than 20 minutes writing (21 writers in total) from those who had spent less than 20 (9 writers in total) and, again, based on the appropriate statistical test of difference, found no statistically significant difference. Level of engagement while writing, then, did not appear to be related to amount of time writing. Although it was not possible to determine how much time was spent per prompt, the

number of words per prompt did not differ in a statistically significant way. Autobiographical creative writing averaged 88 words ($SD = 59$) while critical consciousness-raising writing averaged 83 words ($SD = 53.76$).

SANJAY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

You were so smart as a child, so willful, I don't know what happened. Once your aunt was bringing you back home from school—you always loved school, you were not like your brother, who hated going, was terrified of it. But you were coming back and you were in a foul mood your aunt said. You wanted her to buy you a sweet and she refused. You sat down on the street. Just sat yourself down, in your new school clothes, your new school bag still on your back. Your aunt shouted at you, you ignored her. She asked you to get up, then told you to get up, and then begged you to get up. You ignored her, like solid stone. She tried to lift you, which is when things went haywire. You started screaming. People on the street stopped and gawked.

Your aunt still talks about the hot flash of shame she felt. She was just a slip of a girl, and there you were acting like she was kidnapping you. She explained it to the people about her. They tutted her, told her to be firm. She tried being firm once more, but you threw yourself to the ground and clutched at it like it was your mother.

One of the women standing about came over to lend a hand, and gave you a stern talking to. You said—and to this day I don't know where you learned that word—you said, "Go away, bitch."

Your aunt says she almost melted to the ground in shame. Now people were giving her an unkind look, wondering what sort of family taught a young child words like this. So she—waif-thin though she was—came over and dragged you up, hefted you on her shoulders and carried you kicking and screaming back home.

God, you used to be so willful.

SANJAY'S CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING WRITING

I don't know why I bother waking up some days. But the body gives me no choice. I open my eyes and I'm forced up by the raucous sounds from all around me. A sharp rap on the wall next to my head—Get up, says a voice. I sigh and awaken.

Get up sharp before the sun, stand in line to use the bathroom, one for the ten of us, five in each room. Get done, get on the truck, and get carted to whatever construction site your boss needs you to go to. Break your back all morning. If you're lucky they give you lunch. If not, the foreman will give you part of your pay up front and you find a diner that'll feed you on the cheap, where they don't look unfavorably on your dark hands and faces and small wiry builds. Go back to work till the evening. Stand in line

for your pay. Go back to the room, share a thin broth with your brothers and lie in the close, cramped quarters till the ache in your bones lulls you to sleep.

I didn't expect Bombay to be like this. I was told life would be better here.

AESHA'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

I am very proud of my daughter. She always make me happy of her accomplishments. She is always my very young baby and cannot grow up. I feel good only when she is feels good.

AESHA'S CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING WRITING

You cannot underestimate me because I am a woman. I was not born to serve you but to complete you. I wake up every day to cook your food, clean your house, beat your children, feed your guests and all I need is a word to thank me a touch on my shoulder to rest me and a soft hand to wipe my tears. You men are selfish. I married you to build a family and you marry me to serve this family.

LILING'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

You need to do the housework. It'll be too late if your husband complains about the house. You are such an untidy girl who doesn't like to do cleaning. Yeah, I know, but he will need you to govern his own behavior too. If he sees you working on cleaning, he'll do something too. That's not right. When he says that he doesn't need you to do housework and he has his own share, he's trying to make excuse for you. You don't want him to react like that.

LILING'S CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING WRITING

I get up at 7 am as usual. I don't want to get out of my bed. I don't know if today will be just like yesterday. Working in a bank is not bad really, but I feel my life is purposeless at this point. Before graduating from college, I didn't realize life could be so boring. I have seven colleagues that I like talking to during and after work. Then, I have my college friends and high school friends who came back to our home town after finishing college. That's about all. My circle is so small. At the age of 27 in this small town, all my friends and families think I should have a boyfriend to get ready for marriage. How can I find some one in such a small town? If I have to choose one in the near future, it'll only be a tragedy.

RESULTS: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Table 1 presents the means, medians, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals of likelihood for reported levels of narrative-writing engagement for autobiographical versus critical consciousness-raising creative writing.

	M		Mdn		SD		Lower		Upper	
	Auto	Crit	Auto	Crit	Auto	Crit	Auto	Crit	Auto	Crit
Emotional Engagement	5.50	5.07	6.00	6.00	1.38	1.55	4.98	4.49	6.02	5.65
Attentional Focus	5.33	4.23	5.50	4.50	1.56	1.74	4.75	3.59	5.92	4.88
Narrative Presence	5.20	4.47	6.00	5.00	1.61	1.67	4.60	3.84	5.80	5.09
Total Narrative-Writing Engagement	5.34	4.59	5.5	4.83	1.09	1.16	4.94	4.16	5.75	5.02

Table 1. Means, Medians, Standard Deviations, and 95% Confidence Intervals for Narrative-Writing Engagement by Prompt Type

After the checking of core assumptions, I ran a paired-samples t-test on normally distributed total narrative-writing engagement data, finding:

1. Narrative-writing engagement for autobiographical writing ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.09$) was significantly higher than narrative-writing engagement for critical consciousness-raising writing ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.16$), $t(29) = 3.18$, $p = .003$.

After the checking of core assumptions on each individual item in the scale, I ran a series of non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests, finding:

1. The mean rank of emotional engagement for autobiographical writing (32.88, $N = 30$) was not significantly different from that of critical consciousness-raising writing (28.12, $N = 30$), $z = -1.10$, $p = .273$.

However, the following statistically significant differences were found:

1. The mean rank of attentional focus for autobiographical writing (35.90, $N = 30$) was significantly higher than that of critical consciousness-raising writing (25.10, $N = 30$), $z = -2.44$, $p = .015$.
2. In addition, the mean rank of narrative presence for autobiographical writing (34.88, $N = 30$) was significantly higher than that of critical consciousness-raising writing (26.12, $N = 30$), $z = -1.99$, $p = .047$.

To further investigate reported levels of engagement, I grouped participants by reported level of enjoying creative writing in English. When this was done, two significant differences appeared.

1. The mean rank of emotional engagement for autobiographical writing was significantly higher for those who reported enjoying creative writing in English “A Lot” (18.90, n = 15) than for those who reported enjoying creative writing in English “Some” or “A Little” (12.10, n =15), $z = -2.20$, $p = .033$.

2. In addition, the mean rank of narrative presence for autobiographical writing was significantly higher for those who reported enjoying creative writing in English “A Lot” (19.57, n =15) than for those who reported enjoying creative writing in English “Some” or “A Little” (11.43, n =15), $z = -2.63$, $p = .01$.

	M		SD		Lower		Upper		Sig.
	Auto.	Crit.	Auto.	Crit.	Auto.	Crit.	Auto.	Crit.	
Word Count	87.52	82.98	59.17	53.76	65.43	62.90	109.62	103.05	.779
Emotional Tone	71.28	23.63	34.89	24.16	58.25	14.61	84.31	32.65	.000*
Psychological Processes									
Affective words	9.24	4.76	7.01	2.75	6.62	3.73	11.86	5.79	.004*
positive emotion	7.29	1.67	6.87	1.59	4.72	1.08	9.85	2.26	.000*
negative emotion	1.80	3.07	1.74	2.42	1.15	2.17	2.45	3.97	.054
Social words	19.41	15.94	5.25	7.46	17.46	13.15	21.37	18.72	.041*~
Family	3.80	1.54	2.94	2.73	2.70	0.52	4.90	2.56	.001*
Friends	0.43	0.69	1.16	1.17	-0.01	0.25	0.87	1.12	.258
Female	5.70	1.70	5.82	4.29	3.52	0.10	7.87	3.31	.001*
Male	3.83	3.48	5.19	5.83	1.89	1.30	5.76	5.66	.474
Perceptual words	2.65	2.13	1.99	2.29	1.90	1.27	3.39	2.98	.207
See	0.51	1.03	0.92	1.29	0.16	0.55	0.85	1.51	.148
Hear	0.77	0.66	1.25	1.15	0.30	0.23	1.23	1.08	.681
Feel	0.95	0.44	1.29	0.89	0.47	0.10	1.44	0.77	.036*
Drives words	8.64	7.30	4.31	5.76	7.03	7.30	10.25	11.61	.539~
Affiliation	2.81	3.44	2.58	4.23	1.84	1.86	3.77	5.02	.882
Achieve	2.30	1.11	2.75	2.13	1.28	0.31	3.33	1.90	.015*
Power	2.56	3.81	2.06	3.35	1.79	2.56	3.32	5.06	.141
Reward	2.13	1.06	4.13	1.33	0.58	0.56	3.67	1.56	.300
Risk	0.49	0.56	0.86	0.86	0.17	0.24	0.82	0.88	.742

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, 95% Confidence Intervals, and Significance for LIWC Analysis by Prompt Type

* $p < .05$, statistically significant difference

~ *t*-test used based on normal distribution

Participants who enjoyed creative writing in English “A Lot” did not differ from those who enjoyed it “Some” or “A Little” in any other measure. The trend of significant difference in autobiographical writing by reported level of enjoying creative writing in English, then, did not carry over to the critical consciousness-raising creative writing data.

Regarding the second research question, Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals of likelihood for LIWC analysis grouped by autobiographical versus critical consciousness-raising creative writing.

After the checking of core assumptions, I ran a series of non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests, except for social-processes words data, which was normally distributed and analyzed with a parametric t-test. Statistically significant differences related to psychological processes were as follows:

1. The mean rank of emotional tone was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (41.00, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (20.00, N = 30), $z = -4.69$, $p < .001$.
2. The mean rank of affective processes words was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (37.07, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (23.93, N = 30), $z = -2.91$, $p = .004$.
3. The mean rank of positive emotion words was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (40.53, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (20.47, N = 30), $z = -4.47$, $p < .001$.
4. From a paired-samples t-test run on normally distributed data, social processes words were used significantly more in autobiographical writing ($M = 19.41$, $SD = 5.25$) than in critical consciousness-raising writing ($M = 15.94$, $SD = 7.46$), $t(58) = 2.09$, $p = .041$.
5. The mean rank of family words was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (38.05, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (22.95, N = 30), $z = -3.43$, $p = .001$.
6. The mean rank of words making reference to females was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (37.37, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (23.63, N = 30), $z = -3.23$, $p = .001$.
7. The mean rank of perceptual processes words related to feeling was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (34.68, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (26.32, N = 30), $z = -2.10$, $p = .036$.
8. The mean rank of drives words related to achievement was significantly higher for autobiographical writing (35.82, N = 30) than for critical consciousness-raising writing (25.18, N = 30), $z = -2.43$, $p = .015$.

DO L2 WRITERS WHO ENJOY CREATIVE WRITING IN ENGLISH FEEL DIFFERENT LEVELS OF NARRATIVE-WRITING ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING CREATIVE WRITING?

The results of the study presented here suggest that autobiographical creative writing uniquely engages writers compared to critical consciousness-raising creative writing. The engagement writers feel for autobiographical creative writing is especially striking in terms of attentional focus and narrative presence (or the feeling of being there in the world being imagined). In addition, those writers who reported enjoying creative writing in English the most reported being significantly more emotionally engaged and feeling significantly more narrative presence while writing in response to the autobiographical creative writing prompt, but participants who most enjoyed creative writing did not differ from participants who reported enjoying creative writing in English at moderate levels on any other measure, meaning they did not feel any greater level of engagement while writing in response to the critical consciousness-raising prompt.

DOES AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CREATIVE WRITING EVOKE A DIFFERENT EMOTIONAL TONE FROM CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING CREATIVE WRITING?

The results of the present study suggest that the writing that results from autobiographical creative writing demonstrates a significantly more positive emotional tone. For LIWC, emotional tone relates to how positive the tone is according to the words used. A score of 100 in emotional tone would mean the tone is maximally upbeat and positive; a score of 50 means an even balance of positive and negative emotion words (Pennebaker et al.). Both scores in this present study show mean ranks well below the 50 threshold, of 41 and 20. This means that all stories in general reflected relatively negative emotional tones. Yet the emotional tone of critical consciousness-raising creative writing was significantly more negative than the already negative autobiographical creative writing.

The significantly more positive tone in autobiographical creative writing is reflective of authors fictionalizing events from their past using generally more psychologically positive words, even if the actual events fictionalized were not unanimously what we might call happy or positive life events. Supporting this finding are the significantly more positive-emotion words (e.g., love, nice, sweet) that appeared in autobiographical creative writing. A significantly higher number of affective-processes words (e.g., happy, cried) also suggest that autobiographical creative writing evokes more fictionalized portrayals and thoughts of emotional display.

DISCUSSION

This study's aim was to explore whether L2 writers who enjoyed creative writing in English felt different levels of narrative-writing engagement while writing in response to two different creative writing prompts, with the first prompt putting Hanauer's meaningful-literacy instruction approach into action, in which language use becomes meaningful when it allows a person to reconstruct his or her past through the language and conventions of literary writing ("Meaningful Literacy," *Poetry as Research*), and the second prompt representing Paulo Freire's liberating pedagogy. While earlier empirical research and theoretical arguments allow that the experiences of these two kinds of writing differ, and while creative writing research has concluded that creative writing represents motivating and engaging classroom activity overall (e.g., Chamcharatsri; Garvin; Hanauer, "Meaningful Literacy"; Iida, "The Value of Poetry Writing"), it was not known whether one kind of writing may engage student creative writers at different levels. It was also not known what unique features may result from these different creative writing experiences.

According to self-report data, autobiographical creative writing invoked significantly greater narrative-writing engagement than did critical consciousness-raising creative writing. Looking more closely at the items in the scale, we see autobiographical writing did not emotionally engage writers any differently from critical consciousness-raising creative writing but that autobiographical creative writing did stimulate significantly more attentional focus on the writing activity at hand and a greater sense of narrative presence experienced while creating a narrative world. Another way of putting this is that writers reported being less likely to get distracted while writing autobiographical creative writing and also were more likely to lose themselves in the imaginative world of autobiographical creative writing as they were creating it.

Autobiographical creative writing seemed especially engaging among those participants who reported enjoying creative writing the most. Participants who reported enjoying creative writing at more than moderate levels reported significantly more emotional engagement and narrative presence while writing autobiographical creative writing, but this increase in engagement did not carry over when these same writers completed the critical consciousness-raising prompt. This may mean that those students who most enjoyed creative writing felt unique levels of engagement when the topic of writing was explicitly directed to reconstructions of their own lives and selves.

It is also noteworthy that, when participants were grouped by amount of time spent writing, no statistically significant differences resulted in any measurement of engagement. In my analysis, I grouped writers based on how much time they had spent writing. The first group contained 15 writers who had spent more than 40 minutes writing, and the second group contained 15 writers who had spent less than 40. After finding that the amount of writing time used did not show any link to the level of engagement the writers reported, I looked even more closely, separating the 21 writers who had spent more than 20 minutes from the 9 who had spent less than 20 minutes; again, however, no statistically significant difference appeared regarding how engaged writers reported feeling in relation to how much time they spent writing. This led me to conclude that level of engagement while writing did not seem to relate to amount of time writing.

According to text analysis of the writing that participants created in response to the creative writing prompts, even though the mean ranks of the writing indicated generally negative emotional tones among all stories written, autobiographical creative writing elicited a significantly more positive (or less negative) emotional tone than did critical consciousness-raising creative writing. It seems probable that the autobiographical creative writing prompt, as it was worded to reflect Hanauer's meaningful-literacy approach, invited more positive descriptions of either happy or embarrassing experiences compared to the critical consciousness-raising prompt ("Meaningful Literacy," *Poetry as Research*). Indeed, the more that a person processes an event from their lives, the more the language used to express feelings and thoughts related to that event may change (Tausczik and Pennebaker). Since the autobiographical prompt used in this study asked about a story family members or friends always told about the writer, it would be expected that the prompt would activate reconstructions of memories that had already been articulated in social practice. Research is needed to qualify what this means, yet life-story and narrative theory offer theoretical direction. For Bruner (2004), life storytelling is always a "cognitive achievement":

There is no such thing psychologically as "life itself." At the very least, it is a selective achievement of memory recall; beyond that, recounting one's life is an interpretive act. Philosophically speaking, it is hard to imagine being a naïve realist about "life itself." (692-693)

That autobiographical storytelling is always a selective reconstruction, rather than simple remembering, prompted Crites to describe such retellings as a person's "fictive past" (168). This theoretical position has been echoed by writers, for instance by Murray, who stated that all writing—creative and otherwise—was ultimately autobiographical, since not only did his own writing index reconstructions of memories but also, once having written about it, that reconstructed past became how Murray experienced his life. As Bruner held, "In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives" (694). It is not quite accurate, then, to say that autobiographical writing is theoretically distinct from fiction writing. Still, although the critical consciousness-raising prompt asked writers to think about their "home community," the autobiographical prompt gave writers an even more specific example of how they might complete the prompt by suggesting participants could embody a family member. It seems likely that the more specific family reference in the autobiographical prompt encouraged the significantly more social-processes words (e.g., friend, talk, they) that appear in autobiographical creative writing. The presence of these words may be indicative of a greater sense of social connectedness communicated in the writing (Cohn et al.). Indeed, among these social-processes words was a greater number of references to family (e.g., daughter, dad, aunt), females (e.g., woman, her, mom), and the drive or motive to achieve (e.g., win, success, better). Finally, autobiographical creative writing evoked more words related to feeling (e.g., feels, touch), a tactile nature of perceptual processes. This may reflect the findings that writers reportedly felt greater narrative presence or the feeling of really being in the world they were creating while writing autobiographical creative writing.

Past research into critical consciousness-raising creative writing (i.e., Alexander) showed undergraduate creative writers mostly drawing on stereotypes in fiction about men and women. This finding in Alexander's attempt to nurture what he called transgender rhetorics through creative writing can be understood through what Wenger theorized on imagination's role in communities. For Wenger, although we can "locate ourselves in the world and in history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives" through imagination, imagination can also be "disconnected and ineffective" because of being "based on stereotypes that simply project onto the world the assumptions of specific practices" (178). Stereotypes of marginalized people in society, even if we ourselves represent a marginalized person, may connote negative emotions and a more overall negative emotional tone. Thus even though Murray stated that all writing—creative and otherwise—was ultimately autobiographical, it may be that the most engaging of creative writing experiences are those that ask writers to use the language and conventions of creative writing to reconstruct our pasts, and that this reconstruction of one's own life elicits unique levels of engagement and, even if the events themselves are not clearly positive ones, an overall more positive emotional tone. This is not to say, however, that social consciousness-raising creative writing cannot be engaging by itself. More research is needed here. For instance, research is lacking on how the development of literary expertise might qualitatively alter a person's creative writing. My own research (Nicholes) has suggested that fiction workshopping, in which I worked with a writer to help her more purposefully use fictive modes of characterization, resulted in second drafts of autobiographical future-scenario fiction in which my participant reported investing more emotion. Emotional engagement, then, may change as more novice creative writers gain a handle on creative writing genre conventions. Here, the creative writing practitioner/researcher may be uniquely positioned and qualified to carry out such research.

My study's findings, though offering a convincing picture that autobiographical creative writing uniquely engages creative writers at least upon first drafts, must be considered in light of the study's limitations. My conclusions are based on interpretations of autobiographical and critical consciousness-raising creative writing. Much more work is needed to qualify conclusions about these two kinds of writing prompt, meant to reflect two different guiding theories for writing instruction. In addition, LIWC text-analysis software cannot illustrate what writers were really experiencing, or what they really meant, while they were writing. Using these prompts and LIWC, however, allowed for a more focused approach to answer one dimension of a bigger question of what engages creative writers. While LIWC does not account for context, it accounts for every single word in a text, not only words or phrases that may seem relevant to a theoretically framed analysis. Still, the limitations in this study could be overcome in future research. Preliminarily, future research might look into what students expect from creative writing, as well as what students may have experienced from creative writing to create any such expectations. Is it the case that, as Bishop discussed, creative writing classrooms and experiences are expected to give creative writing students an "opportunity to explore their own histories in their own voices" (43), and do students who enjoy creative writing more than others especially find self-discovery and self-exploration engaging? Theoretical and interpretative research is needed to

flesh out the descriptive understanding the present study presents regarding how writers experience the affordances of creative writing as a way, possibly, “to learn many things about themselves” (Bishop 1).

Creative writing teachers have long used invention prompts to get student writers “in motion” (Bishop 69). The aim of this study was to present data that supports the argument that the field of creative writing will benefit from knowing more about what such prompts are doing exactly. In line with past descriptions of creative writing as offering student writers chances to know more about themselves (Bishop), the data described here seems promising for directing future research as well as future instruction across the curriculum from an autobiographical, meaningful-literacy framework.

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