Translating writing worlds: writing as a poet, writing as an academic

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Introduction

As writers move between poetry and writing academically in their subject disciplines, it is interesting to ask whether the adaptations they make are mainly ones of language and discourse, or whether they reflect something fundamental about the selves they are revealing.   How far does the traversing of difference audiences and communities constitute a change in writer identity? Research into the second language writer suggests that each language represents a different 'self' which is not necessarily translatable (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). Writers such as Hoffman (1989) and Milosz (2000) describe this as a sense of compression and alienation, as the meanings which are clear in one language become untranslatable in the other. A similar process of transition and acculturation takes place as academic writers move from one

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subject discipline to the other. Becher and Trowler (2001) explore the notion of subject disciplines as communities of practice to which academics claim membership by reflecting its dominant discourse and internalising its culture and values. In straddling two such communities, writers commute, often painfully, between discourses and the different values which underpin them. Ivanic suggested in 1994 that research into writing had tended to "disregard writer identity", but that the link between writing identity and how this is constructed through discourse is a critical area for further research (Ivanic 1994, 1998).   This chapter addresses these links between discourse-level choices, and core identity as a writer by sharing the reflective testimonies of fifteen writers who are both poets, and academic writers across multiple subject disciplines, including history, social studies, lexicography, botany, creative arts, technology and English literature. All these writers identify themselves as actively developing their practice across academic-poetic divides and publishing in both domains. In sharing their testimonies, the fifteen poet-academic writers offer us insights into how they experience these dual discourses, and by what processes they negotiate the differences. We consider the way these writers adapt their message as they cross from one community to the other, and the different aspects of themselves they choose to express with each audience. As each writer shares aspects of their writing history, we are also able to ask why, how and at what personal or professional cost they traverse these two writing worlds, and what is lost or gained in translation between the two.

Our principle research questions in this study are;

- What processes do experienced writers engage with when they write for different audiences and purposes?

- What does this reveal to us about the nature of 'creativity'?

- How can these processes be made transparent for the language learner?

In arriving at these questions, we the authors of this chapter both position ourselves as poets and academic writers who have experienced these two writing worlds. In bringing together these worlds, we hope to extrapolate principles of effective writing that might contribute to both the traversing of writing cultures, and also the teaching and the practice of second language writing.

Literature review

Writers have made explicit to varying degrees the process by which a text becomes their own, or to use terminology often adopted by writers themselves, by which they 'find a voice' or make a text authentic. Some describe the moment at which a text becomes 'real' for them. Heaney describes the moment when he finished his first poem: "I felt that I had let down a shaft into real life" (Heaney 1980: 41). Cox and Thielgard describe this moment as the "metaphorical confrontation" with self that turns a cluster of words, phrases or scenes into driven writing that is a form of self-representation (Cox and Thielgard 1987: 45). Although the link between writing and self-representation takes on different

forms and shapes for each writer, many writer testimonies describe the search for "a deep connection between inner life and the words on the page" (Hunt and Sampson 2000: 16). Virginia Woolf describes successful writing when " it has not crushed the thing I wanted to say, but allowed me to slip it in, without any compression or alteration " (Woolf 1929:91). What is interesting to note in our study, is whether and how this connection between the writing self and the inner self is equally potent in the academic context as in the creative/poetic setting from which these quotations derive.

Research into the processes of academic writing have increasingly made this connection between deeper 'selves' and discourse choices. Barton, Ivanic and Hamilton (1999) examine the connection between writing literacies and identification with a community of practice. As writers define their community, so too they tend to shape their discourse in order to assume membership. Becher and Trowler compare academic disciplines to tribes whose structures are partially visible at the surface –such as language and discourse patterns – but partially 'hidden' such as underlying values, beliefs and practices (Becher and Trowler 1999). Just as belonging to two tribes may entail a conflict between belonging and alienation, so too making a crossover between disciplines may be experienced as problematic and even subversive. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) apply these processes of movement from one language culture to the other, in a way that parallels Becher and Trowler's accounts of disciplinary transitions. As the movement between one language and another creates an 'interlanguage' which

may constitute a third identity, so traversing the discourses of poetry and academic writing may entail the construction of a hybrid identity that is neither quite one nor the other. An increasing research literature is emerging to take account of what is sometimes described as 'hybrid' writing, as writers commute between discourses. Prendergast, Leggo and Sameshima (2009), for example, question to what extent there is, or is not, transfer from one writing type to the other. Saunders (2003) explores the need to juggle multiple identities and Turley (2011) questions the intersections and methodological overlaps between different types of writers working within the academy.

Richardson (1997) comments that "all social sciences have prescribed writing formats – none of them neutral, all of them value constituting". How we are expected to write affects what we can write about. Her words, in this seminal text about academic identity, encapsulate one of the key challenges for writers who are required to construct research texts for publication for particular audiences and to develop writing personae which may complement, challenge or be in opposition to other elements within their writing lives. Potgieter and Smit describe the pursuit of scholarly identity and question where and when qualitative researchers 'learn to speak in their own voices or portray their own identities' (2008: 214). The complexities of the writing journey for those new academics who may already be well versed or successful in writing in another form is an aspect which has been under researched and is of particular interest to us.

We aim to consider the development, location and reception of poets working within a variety of academic contexts and communities in Higher Education. We ask how our participants' poetic identities might cohere, contrast with or challenge the academic identities that they have established/are developing/ or perhaps are being required to assume in their academic writing and presentations of academic self. In contrasting the processes of writing for an academic setting and a creative writing audience, we are also able to ask: what is it that differentiates these to? What, therefore, might we extrapolate as the key characteristics of the creative self and discourse?

Methodology

In constructing the research design, we the researchers positioned ourselves both as insiders informed by our own writing practice; and also as outsiders to the experience of other writers. Our challenge was to construct research tools that both allowed us to 'hear' fully the testimonies of others, and recognise the distinctiveness of each; while at the same time bringing to the analysis the capacity to make comparisons and recognise shared themes as insiders. As academic-poetic writers ourselves, we designed a set of interview questions to yield rich information about writing processes and the experience of crossing discourses. We categorised these questions broadly to cover the development of each discourse, its key turning points and challenges, similarities and conflicts between them. In addition, the questions aimed to trigger narratives about both personal writing histories, and writing processes and decision-making. The questions were piloted by ourselves as first informants, honed and refined based

on our responses, and reframed to form a more finely-grained set of questions described in the section below.

What? Questions and themes

In establishing congruence between our own roles as researchers and as participants in the research process, we as co-researchers shared our own writing narratives. We were able to extrapolate from our stories the following four themes around which our narratives cohered.

Different kinds of writing/writing style/writing purpose/writing audience
- How would you describe yourself as a writer? What kind of writing do you engage in most comfortably/naturally? What other writing roles/identities/styles have you developed and why?

Writing story/history
- What key events have helped to shape your choices and development as a writer?

Writing – self and other
- How far have others influenced you in your development as a writer? –

Writing and identity
- What do you consider to be your identity – or identities- as a writer? What does the term 'writing identity' mean to you?

Broadly, these themes seemed to offer opportunity both to describe and to evaluate writing experiences; and also to explore the historical development of

these over time. The writers elected to respond to these questions either by email interview, or face to face interview of one hour recorded and transcribed by the researchers.

Who?

The first challenge in the research design was establishing a transparent and workable definition for 'poet' and 'academic writer', and inviting informants to participate in the study who both met and identified with this definition. In reflecting on descriptors for ourselves as poet-academic writers, we agreed that 'serious engagement' with both writing domains might be a broad definition, but that this would be measured by any form of visibility in the public domain, through publication, performance or external readership, including dissertations visible to external examiners and university libraries. In addition, the writers might be able to self-identify as meeting the following criteria:

- actively engaged in the process of writing academically within the Higher Education research community

  AND

- actively engaged in writing as a poet and in the process of publishing and/or performing their work.

Invitations for academic-poetic writers who met these specific and distinct criteria were disseminated widely through teaching, writing, research, poetry and professional networks,. Fifteen writers between January – July 2014 responded to this invitation. The fifteen writers, including ourselves as authors of this paper,

represented 9 subject disciplines and a wide range of writing experience in both poetry and academic domains. This is summarised in Table 1 below:

Academic experience	Doctoral work, research papers, conference presentations, book proposals, edited books, grant bids, professional, pedagogic & academic publications, peer reviewing; teaching resources
Academic disciplines	Education; Learning Development; Social Work; Social Sculpture; Applied Linguistics; Literature; Medieval History; Lexicography; Botany
Poetry experience	Published poetry collections; pamphlets; readings; exhibitions; journal publications; editor of anthologies; poetry prizewinners; poetry prize judges

Table One: the poet-academic writer backgrounds and experience

Analysing the data

The semi-structured interviews yielded a great deal of rich data which were inadequately captured by the four broad categories listed above. In order to arrive at more finely-tuned categories, both researchers interrogated the data for significant themes and patterns, and collated their readings to form a new set of categories. These categories loosely clustered along several continua, from freedom to constraint, pleasure to pain, 'insider' editor to 'outsider' influence, and from writing as 'authentic' to writing as 'game-playing'. Table 2 below

maps these continua beside the new categories which formed the coding tool for analysing the data.

The inner editor		The outer editor
	Identity with the writing process: Authentic or game-playing?	
	Sense of audience: writing for others or writing for self?	
	The writing community: support and encouragement or rejection?	
	Crafting, honing and writing discipline Freedom or constraint?	
	Challenge and pressure: Positive or negative?	
Pleasure		Pain

Table Two: Coding categories and continua

The continua were significant to note, in that the same situation was experienced by some of the writers as positive and inspiring, and by others as deskilling and negative. The intervention of external editors, the constraints of formal

text types, the culture of 'publish or perish' in higher education settings, were noted by some of the writers as a spur to writing, by others as deskilling and negative. Similarly, processes seen by some as self-regulated and internal, were seen by others as controlled and limited by external editors: for example, linguistic choices, the shaping of discourse, the shaping of message to meet the audience. In formulating an analysis of the data, therefore, a two-dimensional approach appeared to serve the analysis in the way suggested by the table above.

These categories were then used for coding the data, numbering each sentence/utterance thematically and identifying its position on the relevant continua, from pleasure to pain, inner to outer editor.

Findings

Identity with the writing process

The writers tended to polarise along two distinct divides: those for whom academic writing was their first writing 'place' and who moved later into poetry at a 'second writing' stage; and the reverse- those for whom poetry was the starting place and academic writing was (often painfully) later acquired. In describing the transition from one to the other, both groups describe the conscious and disciplined process of learning another discourse. Kathleen describes

'painstakingly' learning the forms and expectations of poetry from a poetry 'mentor', as she deliberately chose to adopt a poetic voice after many years as an academic social scientist. Peter describes the unforgiving rigour of poetry peers and his own 'inner editor' as he moved from academic history to poetry. The role of mentors, peers, and role models, as well as the rigorous 'inner editor' seem to be key characteristics in making this transfer successfully.

Several of the writers describe the sense of 'authenticity' in their familiar writing domain and of artifice as they learnt the rules of the new community. Derek found the language of academics "pretentious and alienating" but felt he could learn it as well as his competitors and join the game. His "game-playing" was fuelled by a competitive spirit to succeed in it as well as his mentors. Diane experienced poetry as her "go-to place" from childhood, and academic writing as rules that needed to be internalised to gain membership of her new academic community. Involved in their transition is a strengthening of resolve, determination, even competition, to learn and succeed in the new discourse.

In making this transition from safe to unsafe, familiar to new ground, some of the writers experienced a sense of multiple selves. David, a botanist, describes the poet self and the botanist self as "almost a split in personalities". He describes a professional conference where an audience member recognised him as an admired storywriter. The experience was "as if I was meeting my other self". Diane, a social sculptor, has developed names and personalities for the different selves she

reveals, and developed them into separate poems. 'I am red' is the "feisty defiant self" but the urban indigene is the self that integrates and adapts, and the one who brings together poetry, activism and doctorate level writing. In contrast, however, several writers had no such sense of different selves. Michael writes: "I act differently in the home, in the pub, in a poetry workshop, on a mountain, in front of a lecture audience, but I don't feel I have multiple or conflicting identities". Alan writes "they're written from different parts of my brain" but does not experience this as a conflict in any way.

Whether or not these writing discourses are experienced as different 'selves', the writers acknowledge that they express different voices, different aspects of themselves and sometimes different messages. Peter describes how in his earlier academic history he had referred to himself as "the author". Changes in his positioning both as a historian and as a poet, had enabled him to confront the subjectivity of the writer and bring himself into both kinds of writing.

Sense of audience

The testimonies broadly split between those who felt a strong connection with audience, such as Alan who writes "All my approaches to writing / poetics involve the desire to want to connect – communicate", and those who felt they were writing for themselves such as David: "when writing poetry I am less concerned with the effect on the reader. In a sense I can please myself before I please anyone else".

In their poetic modes, several were inspired by the presence of 'real' audiences during performance, seeing this as encouragement and instant feedback. David writes "for poetry, publication for me at least includes making public through performance. This is something I enjoy immensely because it enables me to forge a direct bond with my audience." But the tangible sense of audience was not confined to those who met their audience in public performance. Alan writes of a specific stance he adopts in professional writing towards his reader: "I want to be a kind of benevolent mentor (no doubt due to my advanced age!) and to share what I know or think with others". This writer-audience relationship makes constant demands on his decisions at a discourse level: "this means I have constantly to beware of sounding too pompous, elevated and remote from the reality of my readers". Cliff shares this wish "to write for teachers et al in such a way so's not to sound patronising etc". He describes consciously modelling his style on those writers he considers achieve this appropriate tone, at the same time seeking his own voice: "I'm an enthusiastic teacher and I wanted to get that into the writing. It's that old story – finding your voice."

Many writers saw their own role shifting when they addressed the reader of poetry, rather than the fellow-professional or academic. They describe the expectation of readers to be not only informed or educated, but "helped or inspired by the issues". For some this seemed like an increased responsibility to and awareness of the audience. For others, it liberated them from such responsibility. " When I play with language I'm no longer thinking about how I'm going to be understood, who my audience is and the subsequent reception, or

lack of reception. So there is a freedom for me when working experimentally."
Symbolism and metaphor is one specific way in which this impacts on language
and discourse . The writers describe the freedom to be symbolic in poetry: "I am
operating in the symbolic order. I'm in a lawful state, adhering to a governance of
what is poetry. When I am working more experimentally, I'm in an imaginary,
child-like place, where there is a narcissistic quality – the language is looking at
itself. In this experimental mode, I don't need to answer to anyone or anything."

Engagement with community

We see from the testimonies in the section above, that a sense of the audience and
writer relationship remains significant throughout the writing process. It impacts
on language choice and on the freedom or otherwise to play, experiment, and
write at the level of symbol. How far are these decisions influenced by
encouragement or rejection by others? The writers testify to the fact that the
response of the community provides a significant spur to action. Dave explains
he "began writing natural history because 'people (were) encouraging me and
also feeling I was capable of doing it". Cliff describes "the biggest impact on my
pedagogical writing was being asked to write Jumpstart Poetry in the Secondary
School. I learnt how to write it by writing it." Others report on the
encouragement of supervisors and teachers, the importance of good reviews, the
inspiration of publication as a self-perpetuating success, and the response of
fellow writers in poetry workshops and readings. All fifteen writers were able to
cite by name the first teachers, supervisors, publishers, reviewers, peers who first
encouraged them and inspired them to succeed. "It's been enormously important

to have the validation and respect, as well as the friendship of my publisher, because he's one of the best readers of poetry that I've met", writes one. "Publication is a wonderful thing" writes another. All the writers report on the significance of reading others they admire: "coming across brilliant work by other writers – this last one is the most important thing by far – whatever I read goes into the writing."

However, persistence in the face of rejection also emerges as a significant factor in these writing histories. Rejections proved to be as significant a spur to action as encouragement. Giles describes the importance of the first negative reviews which "helped me to think this through and articulate what I was doing, to foreground what I was doing that was different." Some writers considered their reviewers to be unsympathetic and alien readers: "A negative review of a collection is depressing. The worse thing is that sometimes it's because the writer of it isn't up to reading the book – this happened with a particular review of my last full-length collection. It's depressing, like I've said, and makes you feel inhibited – maybe they're right, what's the point, etc. " These rejections are sometimes experienced not simply as assaults on the writing itself, but confrontations with the writing self and sense of purpose. Jane describes redundancy and rejection as catapulting her into academic writing and the desire to "write back" to her doubters, to prove to them her worth at a more visceral level. Derek describes the competitive desire to model his writing on those who

had failed him academically, and show them he could join and succeed in their "game".

In these testimonies, the notion of the poet honing his craft in solitude is profoundly challenged. The community comes to define and inspire, and it is within these communities that writing milestones are reached.   The writers describe the process of consciously absorbing the vocabulary, conceptual frameworks, discourse styles of the community in order to "write back" to it and within it. Their encounters with these communities have a profound impact on their sense of worth, and in honing their ways of communicating, each of them are describing ways in which they are being heard (or not) by the audiences they value.

Crafting, honing and editing

The writers describe the crafting of both academic and poetic writing as equally conscious and painstaking. Some describe academic writing as ""motivated by conscious decisions to communicate instructions, information or opinions". (Michael). They see a clear connection in academic writing between intention and structure: " I have a definite intention which gives rise to the structure etc." (Michael). Alan describes the act of writing a book "gives the work a shape that wasn't there" . In several respects, this finding of structure, and giving shape to messages, was experienced by them as creative in the same way as a poem might be.   "Looking back at a book you've written gives you a new perspective on your work sometimes – you see things you haven't seen before," Dave writes. " I still

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see it as creative insofar as I don't know where it's going until I get there". For Peter too, the academic book travelled further than he had anticipated, "giving voice to the people in history who hadn't been there. I saw I could do it this way and it was really something new".

However, the join between message and academic 'shape' was painful and alien for those who were 'academic immigrants' acquiring this as a second writing style. Diane describes this as the awkwardness of pebbles underfoot; Derek as an adoption of language that seemed to him pretentious and alien. Even for Annette, who describes herself as first an academic writer and only later a poet, the act of writing poetry has emerged as closer to her meaning. Peter echoes this sense of academic language as distancing from himself. He describes his transition from academic to poetic writing, as a "confession that I am in the picture as the writer". "In my first books, I referred to myself as the author", but now as a poet he dares to place himself at the centre and explore his own history as the starting point for other histories.

In searching for the distinctiveness of poetic crafting, it is possible to note the centring of the poetic self as opposed to distancing of the academic self; and the permission to write symbolically and metaphorically referred to in the section above. Giles describes poetic writing as "sharply different' from academic writing: "small-scale formal or semantic patterning, economy of expression, use of implication, images, narrative + different subject matter". Several writers mention the importance of sound in poetry, rather than in prose/academic writing: "I play with language, its appearance, as well as the sonics of language." Several

writers refer to the blend they experience between music and poetry, and the "hearing of poetry" in their mind's ear as they write.

Academic and poetic messages and the inner editor

Many of the writers felt **what** they said was very different in poetry and in academic writing: and the nature of this was fundamental. Diane felt able to write in patois and be a patois speaker/writer in the poetic domain, but was moulded into being more conventional in the academic setting. Peter felt he had made a conscious transition from academic history to poetry, in order to have permission to tell universal and personal stories. Kathleen felt the issues she had dealt with academically needed to touch "hearts and minds" and reach out in a way that academic writing could not do. In making these choices, these writers consciously shift the centre of their message as poets, giving themselves permission to devise their own rules and make their own specific editorial demands. Peter aims to place his personal story at the heart of poetry, Kathleen to touch and change her reader, Cliff to be original to himself each time he writes: "when I write poems I write out of the unknown into the unknown. My aim as a poet is to write something that's different from everything else I've written." Each writer described the unremitting voice of the inner editor, but what it demands is different as they change role from academic writer to poet.

Applying the difference: creative and academic writing

My own narrative of the 'inner editing' serves to illustrate the challenges and dilemmas mirrored in the testimonies of the writers above. The two texts are both

exploring aspects of the same question: how are we shaped by our reading, and how does our reading help define our values and practice as teachers? The first extract is an academic response to this question, entailing a study of the testimonies of fifty English as a second language teachers describing their personal reading histories since childhood. The second extract is from a 4-stanza poem, with each stanza describing one of the libraries which made a difference to my own reading life.

This paper explores teacher experiences of reading in and outside their lives in education, and asks how this reading influenced their beliefs and practice as teachers. Studies of readers reveal connections between reading speed, reading strategy and reading enjoyment (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). We also have some evidence that reading for pleasure and reading fluently are closely connected (Day and Bamford, 1998; Alderson, 2000). However, these studies do not tell us ----	I am the sum of my libraries, the ways they travel, the forests they plant. The whispering is still there, waiting to be found.
extract Spiro, J. (2014) Academic journal	extract Spiro, J. (2014) Poetry

Table 3:   Academic text, poetic text: shared message

1n the academic article, I am at pains to show that my thinking about reading connects with second language literature and research on reading. In so doing, I am establishing a clear connection with my professional community, and earning credibility by doing so. My understanding is that these clues of community recognition are key incentives for my audience to engage. I am also sharing a language that I know to be acceptable within the specific discourse of the research journal: firstly by foregrounding *the paper* rather than myself as researcher; secondly by omitting reference to a specific teacher group in time and place, to suggest generality (at least in the opening section); thirdly by preparing the ground to introduce a new question, beginning with the sentence "However" ---. In addition, the language I have chosen aims to give precise messages and to limit the margin for misunderstanding or varied interpretation.

In contrast my poem does not aim to reference other writers, whether poetic or academic, although it does follow conventions which make it recognisable as poetry. Line breaks are a significant part of the message, unlike in the academic text. Not only do they participate in the rhythm, but they also flag to the reader the type of text they are reading. I as the author identify myself in the very first word: the descriptions are specific to my experience, and I do not claim otherwise. Having said this, like the academic writing example, I am aiming for a degree of universality. I am opening up metaphors which can become zones for readers to project their own interpretations; the links between books and trees, between learning and a journey through a forest; and between the written words of writers over centuries of the written word, and the whisper in the reader's mind.

However, what is interesting from the perspective of 'inner editor', are the 'selves' I felt able to communicate through these different discourses. In the first, academic text, I am accessing what I perceive as an outward-looking self that interfaces as a professional with other teachers and language educators. My interest is in teacher reading histories, and the fact this is driven by my own is of only marginal interest: what is of greater interest is the way the study arrives at a degree of rigour and objectivity, and how it arrives at insights which are about the community as a whole, its patterns, varieties, and characteristics. In contrast, the poem offers my own experience as a metaphor for the reader. It does not aim to persuade that this experience is relatable to the reader by using argument or design. It rather aims to do this by leaving with the reader a choice of relationship or not.

Implications and conclusions

The section above positions me as insider as well as researcher to the process of comparing academic and poetic selves. I have explained poet-academic divides both in terms of their meaning for fifteen writers, and in terms of how this is manifested in my own writing. The section below draws on these several threads of understanding in order to respond to the research questions which opened this paper.

What processes do experienced writers engage with when they write for different audiences and purposes?

The writers reveal to us the importance of the writing community in honing and defining their practice. Whether they perceived writing as freedom and empowerment or as a

form of 'game' with alien rules, both entailed validation by a community. Whilst many were spurred by rejection and setbacks, none who still identified themselves as writers dwelt on this stage of their learning. They had moved beyond this, were writing back in some way to the community that had rejected them. Conversely, all were able to cite examples of inspiration and encouragement from those who read and wrote as peers, critics and editors. Thus, in being a writer, achievement is not 'easy': the inner editor is alert at multiple points in the writing journey. Writers had high standards for themselves in both academic and poetic modes, and rarely described completion that had not been tirelessly earned. In most cases, completion was measured by the inner editor as satisfactory to their personal aims; but this was only finally acceptable to most of the writers if it was validated too by the external world – through publication, audience and positive review.

What does this reveal to us about the nature of 'creativity'?

As poets, the writers felt able to write symbolically and generate meaning through metaphor. Creative writing texts gave the writer permission to generate ambiguities and allow for reader interpretation, characteristics which would be considered a weakness in academic writing. The writers identified other features they would develop uniquely in the poem: sound, visual impact of words on the page, rhyme, experimentation with language, translanguaging between standard and patois/dialect and drawing attention to form. In poetry, writers felt able to place themselves at the centre; they did not need to argue for their generalisability to the reader. To convince the reader, what they aimed for was powerful language, surprise or originality, empathy and appeal to feeling. In

contrast, as academic writers, they felt they needed to be supported by evidence, referencing to a scholarly community, with messages made convincing through logic, argument and evidence.

However, these surface features were not the most important ways in which 'creativity' was explained. In both kinds of writing, shaping ideas through words, giving structure to thoughts, and allowing writing to lead in unpredicted directions were felt to be 'creative' – and these possibilities were true for both poetic and academic writing. Thus, writers found the very features which might be the most constraining as those which were also the most creative: structure, shape, and planning.

How can these processes be made transparent for the language learner?

It is interesting to revisit these findings from practised and practicing writers, in terms of their meaningfulness for learner writers in a second language. The writer testimonies reveal that learning to write entails learning with others: thus peer reviewing, reading appreciatively as a prelude to writing, publication for others, are all a part of writing development. It is thus important as learner writers, to be readers and reviewers as well, and develop the skills of constructive editing of one another.

To balance these roles within a writing community, the learner writer also needs to develop the 'inner editor', setting personal criteria for success. So learner writers need to become their own most rigorous critics, editing their writing both at the surface level of sounds, words, structures; and also at the deeper level in asking "have I communicated

what I intended to?" In answering this question, the writer testimonies in this paper have suggested several sub-questions:

- Am I visible or invisible as the author in the writing?

- Is my goal to be the same or to be different to other writers?

- Do I want my words to have one clear meaning; or many meanings?

The writers in these testimonies have suggested to some extent a demarcation of invisible author/conventional language/literal meanings in academic writing: versus visible author/experimental language/symbolic meanings in poetry. But the distinction between these two is not always so clear-cut, and texts and audiences need to be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Moving from poetry to academic writing is in itself an act of translation, a partial metaphor for the transition from first to second language or culture. As with the language learning process, negotiation is never complete, and resistance to setbacks and failure is as much part of development as success itself. So academic writing and creative writing do not, after all, appear in opposite camps. Combining opposites emerges in all these testimonies: harnessing the known and the unknown, being clear about message and open to unexpected new directions, responding to audience and finding the inner voice.

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Questions for Discussion:

1. Can you track the changes you make in your own writing and explain why and how you made them? What does this reveal about the process of editing and refining written work?

2. Which kind of writing do you prefer to read, an academic essay or a poem? Can you explain your own preferences and responses as a reader?

3. How far do you agree with the conclusions of this paper that writing involves the combining of opposites, such as structure (or planning) and the unpredictable and unplanned? How far is this true in your own writing?

4. How far do you agree that poetry tends to use symbolic language, and academic writing literal? What difference might this make to the way writers choose and use vocabulary?

5. This paper suggests that writers are influenced by audience and do not work in isolation from others. How far do you agree with this? How can writers learn about the audiences for whom they are writing?

6. Think about a topic you feel passionately about. How would you write about this as a poem? How would you write about it in an academic essay? What would be the differences in your language, structure and focus?

7. What would be your reaction to a piece of research reported through poetry or drama, rather than academic writing? Could you imagine reporting on research findings in this way? Why, or why not? What do you think would be the strengths or problems about doing this?

Suggestions for Further Research

1. To what extent does "free writing" in the mother tongue improve writing fluency in a second language? How might you research this question?

 2.   What processes do readers use to interpret academic texts versus creative texts such as poems or stories?   How are these reading processes similar or different? How would you research this question?