

**Independent Project with Specialization in English
Studies and Education**
15 Credits, First Cycle

**The Effectiveness of using L2 Creative
Writing in the Classroom to support
Autonomous Learning and Motivation**

*Effektiviteten av kreativt skrivande i engelska som andraspråk i
främjandet av självständigt lärande och motivation*

William Wachtmeister
Yvonne Efverlund

Master of Arts in Upper Secondary Education, 300
credits, and in Secondary Education, 270 credits
English Studies and Education
2021-01-17

Examiner: Henry King
Supervisor: Chrysogonus Siddha
Malilang

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of creative writing instruction (CW) in classrooms where English as a second language (ESL) is taught. The study aims to determine under what circumstances CW can help learners grow in terms of autonomous learning (AL) and motivation. These benefits stretch beyond formal language acquisition into more personal, socio-cultural, and psychological domains that lead to self-empowerment. AL and motivation are central constructs in the Swedish steering documents. By contrast, creative writing in second-language English (CW L2) does not feature heavily in the steering documents. Given the absence of specific studies, the role of CW L2 in Swedish schools is difficult to estimate and potentially quite limited. Against that background, this study asks under what conditions AL and motivation result from CW L2. It does so by selecting ten articles relevant to the research question and synthesizing thematically two by two. This has allowed us to identify and analyze five essential aspects of CW in L2: first, that pupil surveys widely report positive effects from CW L2 on motivation but that this may not always extend into other areas, notably attitudes toward learning English; second, that instructors can specifically design CW L2 to boost motivation and AL; third, that there appear to be set cognitive patterns as AL is built up through CW L2; fourth, that CW L2 can be readily combined with other modes of output; and finally that teachers can adjust CW to generate motivation in unmotivated learners.

Key terms: *Creative writing, English as a second language, Autonomous learning, Motivation.*

Individual contributions

We hereby certify that all parts of this essay reflect the equal participation of both signatories below:

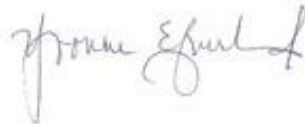
The parts we refer to are as follows:

- Planning
- Research question selection
- Article searches and decisions pertaining to the outline of the essay
- Presentation of findings, discussion, and conclusion

Authenticated by:



William Wachtmeister



Yvonne Efverlund

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Aim and Research Question	9
3. Method	10
3.1 Inclusion Criteria.....	11
3.2 Exclusion Criteria	11
Table 1: Examples of Search Combinations	12
4. Results & Discussion	13
4.1. Survey-based Studies Showing Positive Motivational Effects	13
4.2. Special Techniques for CW L2	15
4.3 Uncovering Cognitive Processes in CW L2.....	17
4.4 Alternative Modes of Output: CW Combined with Video Game and Music	19
4.5 CW Activities and Unmotivated Students.....	21
5. Conclusion	24
References	26
Appendix 1	30

1. Introduction

We will write in foreign languages (real or made-up ones) in order to come to the realization that all languages are foreign. And those that are not are uninteresting in their self-reflecting egoism. (Joris, 1999, p. 155)

From our experience as second-language English (L2) teachers, we know that learning English can be an emotional rollercoaster mixed with incredible highs, frustrating plateaus, and the feeling of not making any progress for learners. Therefore, it is interesting that creative writing (CW) has been presented as an approach that creates positive feelings, identities, and habits for foreign language learners. The epigraph above from poet and critic Pierre Joris (2015) reflects the view that expressing oneself creatively in a foreign language can be a liberating and empowering experience that sets free learners' independence and motivation. For Joris, foreign-language writing is freed from the mother-tongue strictures of family and nation-state. It thereby empowers learners to independently choose the "moment of one's discovery of the other" (p. 155). Reflecting on the spirit of Joris' epigraph, this paper explores under what conditions creative writing in second-language English (CW L2) supports autonomous learning (AL) and motivation in the classroom.

CW can be defined as imaginative writing or writing as an art; its essence is not merely conveying information, although it uses many of the same skills (Stegner, 2002, p. 100). The main purpose is to entertain, give the reader the pleasure of an aesthetic experience, and offer "an imaginative recreation or reflection" (Ibid.). Whether a poem, short story, novel, play, personal essay, or even biography or history, CW is about searching for meaning and discovery, and about involving the author in the result (Ibid.). For CW and language teaching expert Dan Disney (2014), feelings, emotions, experiences, ideas, and thoughts are expressed in unique and inventive ways during foreign-language CW activities, opening the door for "the real self to emerge" (p. 113). Motivation and AL play a central role for Disney: the learner is motivated to "expand their L2 material" (p. 3), and a process of "autonomous creative response" is unleashed (Ibid.). This paper explores under what conditions these two types of positive changes in the individual (AL and motivation) result from CW L2 activities. This introduction will next present the constructs

AL and motivation. It will subsequently highlight these constructs' prominent role in the Swedish curriculum's values section before moving on to CW's limited role in the Swedish syllabi. This introduction concludes by briefly presenting some typical aspects of CW L2 in Sweden.

AL is considered the ability to build up capacities for acquiring a new language independently. Launching the AL concept forty years ago, Holec (1981) famously summarized AL as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (p. 3). This paper also follows the established definition of student motivation by Gardner (1982), who proposed three constitutive elements: effort (time and drive), desire (longing to succeed), and affect (positive emotions). Moreover, motivation is often divided into two basic types: integrative and instrumental (Carrió-Pastor & Mestre Mestre, 2014, p. 240). The former is about the learner having positive feelings toward joining a language community, and the latter is about gaining social or economic rewards (Ibid.). This study's two constructs overlap significantly with related educational aims, such as learner confidence and curiosity, in the literature. They also feature (and overlap) extensively as fundamental constructs in the Swedish steering documents.

A wide range of claims has been made in favor of CW L2. CW's role in generating better formal linguistic L2 performance has long been recognized (e.g. Avramenko *et al.* 2018, p. 55). More recently, attention has also turned to psychologically and socio-culturally grounded phenomena, including AL and motivation. Psychological benefits are central for contemporary CW L2 proponents who claim in various ways that CW L2 empowers learners "in a way that other kinds of writing cannot to the same extent" (Lam, 2016, p. 483). Despite these claims, and as the conclusion briefly discusses, we have found that empirical research conducted on CW L2 is sparse and that research is often conducted by teachers on their own learners.

The Swedish *Curriculum for the compulsory school*, which includes years 7-9 (Skolverket, 2018a), and its upper-secondary equivalent (Skolverket, 2018b) place the independent student center-stage and promote "the all-round personal development of pupils" (2018a, p. 7). The school environment must strive to ensure that students feel secure in developing their own identity and are free to develop their ability to write, narrate, reflect, and express their views. They thereby develop their language ability and concepts, along with their communicative skills. Additionally,

schools “should stimulate pupils’ creativity, curiosity, and self-confidence” (p. 8). The autonomous student’s evolutionary path to active democratic citizenship and career opportunities is pursued with independent work (2018b, pp. 6,7,10), self-confidence (pp. 5, 8, 9, 11), curiosity (p. 5), and willingness to learn (pp. 5, 9, 11).

From a CW perspective, it is notable that the already small amount of CW prescribed by the steering documents declines further in the syllabi for older age groups. While the syllabus specifies songs, rhythms, and dramatization for English Year 1, by the time pupils enter years 7-9, the syllabus lacks precise prescriptions for creativity in writing (Skolverket, 2018a). Of course, the syllabi for teaching English in the higher years (Skolverket, 2018c) do not explicitly preclude CW’s use, but the underlying assumption appears to be a gradually diminishing path of CW content. In this way, teachers in Sweden, especially from Year 7 onwards, need to independently make decisions about the right type and amount of CW activities for their L2 students with only minimal guidance from the steering documents. One of this paper’s core aims is to offer teachers an interpretation of the available empirical evidence on when and how CW boosts AL and the motivation of L2 learners.

At least two characteristics make the study of CW L2 complex. First, teaching CW L2 contains an inherent pitfall. In the L2 classroom, a relatively large amount of scaffolding needs to be used to enable students to complete their CW tasks, but after a certain point, more scaffolding will ultimately only “stifle creativity” (Lundahl, 2012, p. 300). Therefore, teachers need to carefully balance autonomy and proximal development (Ibid.; Parr & Timperley, 2010, p. 69). Another complicating factor is that CW can easily, and potentially very fruitfully, be combined with an endless set of other modes of teaching. For example, this paper looks at one CW L2 study that includes Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) and another with both music and collaborative writing. In these cases, it is challenging to disentangle the importance of the CW component itself from the importance of additional elements that also potentially generate AL and motivation.

Finally, we note that we have located only one study that offers direct evidence on the question of how much CW is actually taking place in Sweden’s 7-9 and upper secondary L2 classrooms. A survey-based study by Henry *et al.* (2018, p. 247) asked 252 Swedish years 6-9 teachers which

strategies successfully generated motivation in their L2 classroom. This yielded 112 activities, of which thirty descriptions were creative. Only a limited number of these thirty were genuine CW activities such as finishing a story while most were other creative activities such as making news programs. Additionally, there were 15 activities of personal relevance where activities ranged from CW diary-writing to activities such as the oral presentation of personal musical tastes. The study implies (but does not directly discuss) how infrequently teachers select CW compared with other creativity-inducing and motivating activities. According to the paper, empirical research “has not been extensive,” and “little is known” about strategies for selecting motivational learning activities (p. 252). The paper illustrates how poorly studied and potentially limited in scope the twin phenomena of CW and motivation are in the Swedish context. This demonstrates the relevance, from a teaching perspective, of investigating what type of CW can be implemented in the classroom to maximize motivation and related outcomes, such as AL.

2. Aim and Research Question

As we have seen, CW L2 promises many potential benefits in the shape of AL and motivation, and these benefits are in line with the educational goals in the Swedish curriculum. However, CW's overall status in L2 classrooms in Sweden is uncertain, and the extent to which it is actually taught is difficult to estimate. A teacher in Sweden who wants to introduce CW activities in L2 lessons must do so on the basis of limited empirical evidence and little guidance from the syllabi. With this situation in mind, the analysis of empirical studies below seeks to identify in what circumstances CW L2 supports the development of AL and motivation.

On that basis, our research question is as follows:

- Under what conditions does L2 creative writing support autonomous learning and/or motivation in the classroom?

3. Method

Our study's first step was to identify concepts closely related to AL and motivation in L2. The aim was to establish whether any additional search terms could be taken as proxies for our two core constructs. We identified three such concepts connected to the benefits of CW: self-regulation (SRL), confidence, and curiosity. In CW, self-regulation occurs when individual writers regulate their ongoing writing process covering the organization of ideas, actual writing, reflecting, and editing (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 69). These skills form part of a self-generating process involving one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, which ultimately formulates the writing results (Ibid.). From that point of view, SRL is clearly consistent with Holec's definition of AL as taking charge of one's learning (see Introduction). The next concept, confidence, is boosted in a self-reinforcing way as L2 writers strengthen their CW skills (Avramenko *et al.*, 2018; Arshavskaya, 2015). Finally, CW is an outlet for expressing one's imagination by getting thoughts down on paper, but L2 learners may struggle with it because it can feel unstructured. Here, CW can also be a tool to encourage curiosity among learners about, for example, grammar and sentence structures.

The second step was to create clusters of terms that meant approximately the same thing as AL, motivation, and related terms. These groupings of terms were set up specifically for our database search and are presented in table form in Appendix 1. We used many combinations of these search terms (see Appendix 1) to search for relevant studies, which eventually led to eight relevant articles in Libsearch (the library service at Malmö University, which links through to ERIC and other EBSCO databases). For example, the search terms "creative writing activities," "English," and "attitude" produced three articles on Libsearch, the first of which, Tok & Kandemir (2014), was subsequently used in our analysis (see table below). "Self-regulation" and "L2" yielded 27 results with Qiu & Lee (2020) in 10th position. Despite extensive search attempts, no relevant articles in Swedish were found on any of the databases, including SwePub (a database for Swedish-language academic material). We also consulted Google Scholar where we located one additional article, Dougherty (2015), which came in 16th place via a search for "creative

writing,” “motivation,” and “EFL.”¹ Finally, we internally searched the website of an innovative journal specializing in CW, *New writing*, where we located Mansoor (2010) and Zhao (2014). Because of the domain’s sparsity, we applied a generous date range starting in the year 2000. Having applied our criteria (discussed below), this gave us a total of ten empirical papers.

3.1. Inclusion Criteria

We have included studies from all over the world, covering various teaching techniques because the aim is to learn about the differing conditions in which different CW L2 approaches succeed or fail. In keeping with our focus on years 7-9 and upper secondary, we have set a lower age limit of 12-13. However, studies with young learners were rare (represented, most importantly by Tok & Kandemir, 2014). In order not to exclude relevant studies carried out with university-level students, we have not set an upper limit on learners’ age.

3.2. Exclusion Criteria

As mentioned, numerous studies contain other writing types than the definition of “creative writing” used in our paper (see Introduction). Examples that were excluded on these grounds include Teng & Zhang (2017), Chien Ching (2002), and Seker (2016). Because they did not contain empirical studies, we also excluded several journalistic or promotional write-ups of CW projects even though the topics were highly relevant to our research question (e.g. The Postcard Project by Rowinsky-Geurts, 2010). Partly as a result of these exclusion criteria, the conversion rate of most of our searches was relatively low, as reflected in the table below.

¹ Our paper follows the definitional convention that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught in countries where English is not an important or official language. English as a Second Language (ESL) is the preferred term in countries where it is. Where in doubt, the usage of the cited authors has been followed. Where the EFL/ESL distinction is not relevant or applicable, “L2” is used.

Table 1. Examples of Search Combinations

Search location and search terms	Total search result items	Number and names of items subsequently used
Libsearch: Creative writing activities / English / attitude	3	2 (Tok & Kandemir, 2015; Gómez, 2016)
Self-regulation / L2	27	1 (Qui & Lee, 2020)
Creative writing / motivation / EFL	16	2 (Lee, 2019; Tarnopolsky, 2005)
Google Scholar: Creative writing / motivation / EFL	76	3 (Dougherty, 2015; Choi & Wong, 2018; Arshavskaya, 2015)
New writing (journal): Creative writing / L2	10	2 (Zhao, 2014; Mansoor, 2010)

4. Results & Discussion

This section presents our results and syntheses of the articles selected as relevant to our research question about the conditions under which CW L2 generates AL and motivation. We analyze two papers at a time, starting with the papers' research aims, methods, and results. We conclude each subsection by proposing a synthesis and discussion of the two papers' main implications for the research question. The articles have been paired up thematically and focus sequentially on individual aspects of our research question. The themes are survey-based studies on the effects on learners of CW L2, the application of special techniques for motivation, the uncovering of cognitive processes that lead to AL, the use of alternative modes of output (video games and music) and, finally, the implementation of remedial CW activities for unmotivated learners.

4.1. Survey-based Studies Showing Positive Motivational Effects

Dougherty (2015) and Tok & Kandemir (2015) represent two straightforward survey-focused studies that identify positive motivational effects from CW activities. The CW activities were in both cases designed to reflect the ability level of the participants and were integrated into regular lesson planning. Dougherty's (2015) study was split over two locations, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bangladesh. The participants in each group had different age profiles and nationalities. The course in Bangladesh took place in 2014, five years after the one in UAE, and consisted of new insights and perspectives from the earlier study (p. 2). Dougherty considers his study's overwhelmingly positive results on motivation "important for their universal applicability" to teaching English through CW (p. 11). While Tok & Kandemir's (2015) study of younger learners also found strong positive effects on motivation in their study in Turkey, their results show a negative to zero effect of CW L2 on learner attitudes toward English as a subject.

Tok & Kandemir (2015) investigated the effects of CW activities on writing achievement, writing disposition, and attitudes to English. Their study consisted of 31 seventh-grade students, 17 females and 14 males aged 13-14 at a state-run school in Denizli, Turkey. In the four-week series,

the learners produced a biography as a pre-test, a written piece on their upcoming holidays, a story about a picture, and a story with an opening paragraph chosen through multiple-choice. The series concluded with biography writing as a post-test. The authors describe these writing activities as basic, reflecting the level of the students (2015, p. 1638). Dougherty (2015) investigated the effects of a short intensive CW course for students in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE, 15 male students) and a series of module-integrated CW activities in Dhaka (Bangladesh, 13 females and 5 males). All of Dougherty's students were university-age apart from five significantly older Bangladeshi students. All UAE students in Dougherty's study completed the same CW assignments: an ice-breaker introduction based on an acrostic poem, a poetry slam, and a poetry anthology. For the two-week course in Bangladesh, the students focused on three genres: a memoir, poetry, and short story. Like Tok & Kandemir, Dougherty explicitly aimed to ensure the tasks were set at the learners' level (Dougherty, 2015, p. 2).

Dougherty's (2015) two groups were given twenty survey questions focused on the course's impact on "motivation" and "sense of improvement" (p. 9). All main categories of responses were overwhelmingly positive on the motivational effect of CW (71% in UAE; 100% in Dhaka). They were also positive on whether they would carry on writing English outside the classroom (94% and 100%, respectively) and on whether they thought that CW motivates someone to become a better user of English (80% and 100%).

Tok & Kandemir (2015) used a before-and-after writing achievement test (the biography exercise) as well as before-and-after questionnaires on attitudes and disposition. Disposition was conceptualized as a broad affective construct capturing writer resources such as self-discipline, perseverance, risk-taking, motivation, and self-efficacy (p. 1636). Attitude toward learning English was captured through pupils' "affective factors" towards English instruction (Ibid.). Tok & Kandemir found that the mean score in the biography pre- and post-test increased in a statistically significant way, as did the score in students' evaluation of their writing disposition (increases of over 10% and 15%, respectively). However, the score in writing attitude decreased (in a statistically non-significant way). The authors suggest that the first two results imply that CW L2 works at the study's level and context (2015, p. 1640). They hypothesize that the third (negative) result may be because studying one aspect of English over a short period is not enough to affect attitudes (Ibid.).

Dougherty (2015) notes that an individual must accept elements of an alien culture into his or her life when learning another language (p. 1). By contrast, Tok & Kandemir (2015) do not address culture at all. However, their “Attitudes to English” survey component can be seen as capturing something about students’ willingness to join an alien culture, that is to say, their integrative motivation (see Introduction). From that point of view, it is particularly noteworthy that the attitude measure showed zero or negative effects. Tok & Kandemir (2015) speculate that the short-lived nature of the intervention meant attitudes could not be changed. One could also speculate that this apparent lack of integrative motivation may have something to do with the learners’ relatively low age, but the article does not address this possibility. It should also be noted that it can be inferred from both studies that activities had been designed with the right balance of scaffolding and creative freedom for the pupils (Lundahl, 2012, p. 300; see Introduction). From the perspective of a teacher contemplating CW L2, the positive effects of setting CW L2 at the right level for the learners, therefore, appear intuitively apparent from the two papers. However, substantially more research is needed before anything conclusive can be said about CW L2 and its universality. More specifically, additional research could help explain results such as the failure of CW L2 to generate integrative motivation in Tok & Kandemir’s study.

4.2. Special Techniques for CW L2

When planning a CW activity, a teacher can consider specific teaching techniques to make L2 learners even more motivated to become autonomous in their writing. Two papers, Tarnopolsky (2005) and Choi & Wong (2018), find that specifically designed CW writing tasks can indeed lead to desirable outcomes, including higher motivation and AL. Tarnopolsky’s article shows the positive effects of a set of classroom techniques for improving EFL university students’ writing skills in Ukraine. By way of comparison, Choi & Wong’s article explores the use of pedagogical interventions to scaffold high school ESL learners in Hong Kong to help them develop their effectiveness in creating narratives.

To illustrate how different CW techniques can inspire motivation, Tarnopolsky (2005) shows how effectively a five-step technique works on EFL university students pursuing English-

language careers as EFL teachers, translators, and interpreters in Ukraine. Tarnopolsky's technique was designed to improve writing skills and generate positive motivation. It consisted of firstly, combining process and genre approaches to teach writing to EFL students while adapting to their different levels of language proficiency; secondly, paying particular attention to students' CW description, narration, and discussion competencies; thirdly, developing commentary and critiquing skills; fourthly, conducting peer-review and related activities and, finally, building up AL by introducing free-choice writing (pp. 78-79).

Meanwhile, Choi & Wong (2018) explore techniques designed to challenge high school ESL learners and provide them with benefits through collaborative discussions and the production of practical and creative narratives. Their scaffolding approach is designed to support ESL learners in managing the narrative genre's cognitive, structural, and linguistic demands. In addition, they use a detailed writing process with a short-story writing task to activate students' motivation. In a similar way to Tarnopolsky, Choi & Wong use five pedagogical principles to enhance ESL learners' intrinsic motivation to write: selecting texts that are well-organized, vivid, and familiar to the students; selecting texts with rich imagery or suspense; providing background information; offering free choice to increase autonomy in writing and activating students to use literary devices to make meanings (pp. 2, 6). Both sets of authors claim their five CW features are reliable and efficient given an environment where the student can autonomously choose what to write about and how to write it (Tarnopolsky, 2005, pp. 78-79; Choi & Wong, 2018, pp. 2, 6).

Both studies show how their specific CW teaching techniques motivate unmotivated students (see also Section 4.5). Tarnopolsky (2005), who is also the instructor, monitored her students' development in CW studies for over two years. She found that there were extraordinary improvements for the L2 writers and attributed this primarily to the successes of the CW course (p. 87). The L2 learners had become highly motivated in their writing, and they were most creative and efficient when they were autonomous in choosing what to write and how to write it (p. 78). In their study, Choi & Wong (2018) reported that based on a competence model of CW instructions, the ESL learners could make authorial design choices in their intentions, thereby increasing their AL (p. 3).

Additionally, Choi & Wong (2018) claim that L2 writers improved their language skills by being both creative and adventurous by developing their imagination and writing abilities. The studies indicated that the students were initially unmotivated or became demotivated, but after completing the CW activity, the added language skills helped them become active autonomous learners. Both studies also involved students with mixed English proficiency levels, a characteristic shared with many instruction settings including Swedish schools, especially at upper secondary (Skolverket, 2000, p. 30). Despite differences in the two methods, both articles' final results also found improvements in the students' confidence when using the English language. The Swedish syllabus (2018a, p. 33) states that when teaching L2 learners, the teacher should strive to help the development of pupils' knowledge of the language and improve their confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations for various purposes. The studies suggest that teachers can use specific techniques to successfully achieve this outcome. They suggest that adapting the CW L2 special techniques to pupil abilities plays a central part in their success. These special techniques' potential is especially pertinent given the apparent lack of CW motivational techniques in L2 teaching in Swedish schools (Henry *et al.*, 2018).

4.3. Uncovering Cognitive Processes in CW L2

Investigating how learners think during CW L2 offers valuable insights into the underlying psychological mechanics of AL and motivation. Two papers, Zhao (2014) and Qiu & Lee (2020), investigated learners' thinking processes during CW L2 tasks. Focusing on identity and empowerment, Zhao (2014) asked participants to talk out loud during the writing process while Qiu & Lee (2020) recorded students' self-regulated learning (SRL) during paired collaborative writing tasks. Both papers thereby generated specific insights into cognitive processes and, in particular, how AL develops during CW activities.

In a close-up study of two English learners, Zhao (2014) investigated how CW L2 functions as a self-empowering tool that boosts social positioning and self-esteem. Both learners, a male 19-year-old from Germany and a 20-year-old ethnically Chinese male from Singapore, had personal aspirations for learning English. The study initially mapped the two learners' self-perceptions in interviews. Subsequently, the two learners each did a first-person narrative task followed by a continuation fiction task. During the writing process, think-aloud techniques were applied

whereby the writers put into words, as far as possible, what they were thinking (p. 457). Through this technique, the author identified how writing choices were closely structured by the students' cognitive processes and their sense of self-esteem. On that basis, the article tracks how the L2 writers, as social agents, interweaved creative expression, self-perception, and language. The study found that the CW activities had allowed the L2 learners to build an autonomous and independent counter-discourse aligning past experiences with "appropriate, liberating or convenient" new identities (p. 454). In so doing, both learners built up significant self-empowerment.

In the Chinese EFL context, Qiu & Lee (2020) examined the relationship between, on the one hand, collaborative writing (in a series of CW tasks) and, on the other, students' self-regulated learning (SRL) along with related phenomena. SRL was identified in recordings of the thinking processes of the students as they produced texts in pairs. The study centered around five main "continuation fiction" writing tasks (p. 4) integrated into a 15-week creativity-focused course for 24 students. Three of the writing tasks were collaborative, and these discussions were recorded in order to identify SRL using a specially produced template. The study found that the students increasingly used SRL techniques in the second and third CW tasks. Additional self-reflective notes and semi-structured interviews found that 11 of the 24 participants believed they raised their SRL awareness during the project.

Both studies show how encouraging students to talk aloud during the writing process can help identify the dynamics around key constructs, notably self-empowerment and SRL. Zhao traces two identity journeys that increase self-empowerment, whereas Qiu & Lee (2020) follows L2 learners who boost their SRL as they do more CW tasks. Beyond that, Qiu & Lee's focus on collaboration may be considered especially pertinent given Sweden's widespread use of group work in English 7-9 and upper secondary classes (Lundahl, 2012, p. 25). The study implies that collaborative writing in CW L2 may be a relatively easily implemented way of boosting SRL and thereby AL in English instruction in L2 classrooms. As outlined in Section 3, SRL is closely related to AL, as both constructs centre around the student taking charge of their own learning. For its part, the study by Zhao (2014), despite its minimal sample size, makes a valuable contribution in its direct pursuit of the same type of self-empowerment that Disney (2014) considers central to CW L2. These mechanics notably include self-esteem (affect factors) and

L2 identity (integrative motivation). In this way, both studies contribute to the idea that there are inherent internal cognitive and affective processes behind CW L2 that are closely linked to motivation and AL. Knowing these processes is vital for any L2 teacher who wants to structure instruction around learner characteristics.

4.4. Alternative Modes of Output: CW Combined with Video Game and Music

The use of alternative modes of creative output can have positive, dynamic effects when added to the CW L2 mix, according to two recent studies. Lee (2019) considers the effects on South Korean students of Digital game-based learning (DGBL) combined with a CW project. Gómez published a study (2016) about CW and song-writing activities with online music sharing between groups of ESL students with different first languages.

Seeking out the effects on students of DGBL combined with CW, Lee (2019) focuses on *Her Story*, a single-player murder mystery video game. The participating 25 university students were majors in English with largely intermediate language abilities but no prior experience in CW. A key aim of the project was to enhance student interest and motivation in language learning. The students were required to keep a game-play journal, reconstruct the game's story and produce, with complete freedom, a two-page piece of CW finishing the game's narrative. There were also pre- and post-project surveys focusing on level of interest, motivation, creativity, and language learning. Lee offers a great deal of supporting argument for her selection, as the main task, of asking students to finish the game narrative. She mentions considerations including the creation of a "springboard for creative writing" (p. 246), the sustenance of intrinsic motivation and curiosity, the benefits of contextualized and situated learning, along with the creation of a "narrative space that cultivate(s) imagination and play" (Ibid.).

Before the intervention, Lee's (2019) pre-survey found low levels of self-reported creativity among the learners as well as low perceived creativity used in language learning class. There was, however, a clear desire to work more creatively. After the project, the post-survey showed that approximately 75% of students reported that they felt they had been very creative during the project. They had found the project difficult (50.3%) but very interesting (75%) and motivating

(68.8%). It had also raised their curiosity (63.8%) and enhanced creativity (78.3%). The reflection papers mirrored the surveys as words like “enjoy”, “motivating” and “curiosity” were frequently employed. Lee notes that while her project consisted of individual work, there may have been even stronger benefits had the students worked collaboratively (p. 250).

By contrast, Gómez (2016) uses CW, music and an overtly collaborative learning approach. Within the remit of the EU-funded PopuLLar2 project, Gómez uses the creation of L2 lyrics as well as the publication of YouTube music videos to attain PopuLLar2 goals. These goals include helping students “to combine their love of music with creativity, literacy, digital competencies, group collaboration and use of foreign languages through CW in an L2” (p. 41). The pilot study was conducted in Spain with eleven students, eight girls and three boys aged between 12 and 17. There were three teachers: one English teacher (who is also the researcher) plus two Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teachers. The core activity was for students to produce L2 lyrics based on a given instrumental song and a preceding exercise that used L1 lyrics. After that, the L2 writers published their songs on YouTube so that other English (L2) learners could read and listen to the lyrics and subsequently translate them to their first language. Doing this created a communicative and dynamic language-learning community: the activity’s goal was not to create expert songwriters but to be creative and have fun while engaging, internationally, in CW L2. Reviewing the output and surveys, the author concludes that the project is “an excellent way to motivate students to learn and practice languages in a real context” (p. 45-48).

In both cases, the researchers have taken care to astutely marry, respectively, gameplay and music composition to CW. While Gómez (2016) does not quantify the positive effects, the description of the pupils and quality of the composed music is testament to a boost in motivation. What is more, both authors stress the authenticity of the experience. In the absence of larger-scale studies with control groups, it is of course impossible to isolate the effects of the CW element on its own, or of the design of the combination and how well it was carried out. However, the studies do show that, if done intelligently, CW can be combined smoothly with additional elements like music and video games.

Music has a special historic role but is relatively under-resourced in Swedish schools (Larsson & Westberg, 2019, pp. 379-380). As mentioned in the introduction, while songs and rhythms

feature in the syllabi for the early years, no such prescriptions exist for years 7-9 or upper secondary. Any replication of Gómez's study would thereby hold great potential but place demands on school resources and teacher time and expertise. Similarly, it may be noted from Lee's perspective that the use of video games in schools has long been discussed and at times strongly advocated for in Sweden (e.g. Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). However, while Sweden's school pupils are very advanced in digitization, teachers in Sweden have long sounded the alarm over the lack of available resources and training in this area (e.g. Digitaliseringsrådet, 2018, p. 23). In this way, while the papers clearly appear to show the benefits of combining CW L2 with alternative modes of output, resourcing may be an inescapable constraint in many circumstances in the Swedish schooling system.

4.5. CW Activities and Unmotivated Students

Faced with unmotivated students, Mansoor (2010) and Arshavskaya (2015) introduce CW strategies designed to help learners overcome their motivational hurdles. Mansoor's study proposes teaching technique solutions in response to a situation where the entire sample set of over 60 university-level L2 learners had become unmotivated with CW because they felt they lacked linguistic abilities, mainly grammar. In her study, Arshavskaya utilizes a series of CW assignments to engage nine insufficiently motivated students in an L2 writing course. The assignments focused on the content of student writing as well as student attitudes towards CW.

The participants in Mansoor's (2010) study were all university students. Most of these were enrolled in Pakistan's International Islamic University's BS English program, while some were in the University's BS Software Engineering program. The students had initially been favorable towards the CW course but changed their minds. According to the main survey taken to explore why students had lost their motivation, all said their problems were in grammar (tenses, subject-verb agreement, and articles). Almost all said they needed significantly more exposure to the target language through reading and writing. Some claimed their scattered ideas made it hard to produce a coherent text. Only 10% of respondents said they planned their work before starting to write. The author, who knew the students well, identified rote learning in earlier schooling as the root cause of such demotivation (pp. 205-206). This had failed to equip the learners, who were all products of the Pakistani schooling system, with basic means of self-expression (Ibid.).

In Arshavskaya's article, the students were nine international undergraduate students in their twenties (four females and five males) enrolled at a southwestern American university in an advanced-level ESL course in academic writing. These were low-achieving students who were culturally quieter and uneasy with using English in speaking and writing (p. 68).

As Mansoor (2010) notes, teachers faced with unmotivated students need to continually devise techniques, methods, and activities to enable L2 learners to develop language proficiency while simultaneously honing their creative skills (p. 201). With those aims in mind, the author created and applied a range of remedial CW techniques to the students in question. These techniques were first, amplifying vocabulary through various creative variations on the traditional word list as well as regular looking up of single, new words; second, the assignment of bonus points for the use of new words in written assignments; third, creative activity around inventing neologisms; fourth, acrostic poetry and poetry around random English phrases encountered by the student ("found poetry"; p. 208); fifth, fill-in-the-gap poetry, including with a correct meter; sixth, the supply of quotations, texts, and templates for genre crossover; and finally, the composition of students' own one-act plays and short stories. After these remedial activities had been implemented, "a refreshing trend" of students assimilating vocabulary from their own languages into English to produce creative results was observed by the author (p. 211). This reflected a marked reduction of fear when it came to writing in English, and the learners felt free to experiment and express themselves (pp. 211-212).

In her study, Arshavskaya (2015) uses a qualitative data approach based on student writing content and student responses to an end-of-semester survey. For the student writing part, she designed a CW assignment that required the students to carry out basic library research and consult peers and friends about the assignments' topics. This was also a way for the author to ensure the writing activities were in line with the course's criteria. Before assigning the series of CW activities, the students were introduced to concepts such as dominant and marginalized groups of people, critical consciousness, empathy, knowledge, and power in a classroom discussion. The CW activities consisted of journal writing for students to express and share their ideas in writing. Once their confidence level increased, they wrote poems and other forms of CW. The students' writing was graded on content, such as idea development and persuasive evidence, rather than grammatical structural or spelling errors.

Both papers emphasize that in order to engage students in becoming creative writers, teachers need to motivate them by boosting their confidence (Mansoor 2010, pp. 201, 211; Arshavskaya 2015, pp. 6, 73-74). In Mansoor's case, this is conceptualized as a dilution of fears. Both studies re-motivated their students with techniques, methods, and activities based on scaffolding, encouragement, and the cultivation of independence. They did this to enable students to learn and develop into independent learners, confident in using English in writing (Ibid.). This fostering of motivation through independence and confidence mirrors the fundamental aspects of AL and motivation in the steering documents for Swedish schools (see Introduction).

While the remedies worked well, Mansoor's study (2010) reveals a problematic side with CW. It appears that students, even a relatively large sample, can simply switch off from learning when faced with CW configured at a level that they feel demands too much of them. This suggests that situations exist where students miss out on any AL or motivational benefits because the CW activities surpass the students' own belief in their language ability. In such situations, teachers play an essential role in implementing activities that will motivate and interest learners. Mansoor describes the teachers' task as "manifold" (p. 201), including, in particular, the scaffolding needed to help students with vocabulary usage and developing a practical approach to grammar (Ibid.). Likewise, Arshavskaya (2015) mentions problems with students who were reluctant to write in their journals and found it challenging to express and share their writing ideas. In this situation, challenging and interesting methods encouraged L2 writers to express themselves by, for example, integrating their own experiences with set topics. Once that was accomplished, both authors reported that many students expressed opinions that CW (in its many different forms) had helped them improve by creating new ideas and thereby adding to motivational levels (Mansoor, 2010, p. 205; Arshavskaya, 2015, p. 69). Both interventions have managed to boost the three basic elements of student motivation: effort, desire, and emotions (Gardner, 1982; see Introduction).

5. Conclusion

The potentially universal applicability of CW L2 has been identified as an important area of research. Based on Dougherty (2015) and Tok & Kandemir (2015), we found strong positive motivational effects from level-adjusted CW L2, but this did not appear to extend to attitudes toward English. While successful CW L2 appeared throughout our study to depend on adapting CW material to student abilities, Tarnopolsky (2005) and Choi & Wong (2018) showed how instructor expertise could be used to devise techniques to attain outcomes specifically in AL and motivation. The underlying cognitive processes of CW L2 are another major potential area of research where the contributions by Qiu & Lee (2020) and Zhao (2014) identify the centrality of learner SRL and self-empowerment. The papers by Lee (2019) and Gómez (2016) show that CW L2 can be successfully combined with alternative modes of output (video games and music), but this leaves the effect of the CW component on its own difficult to estimate and also potentially creates practical implementation challenges. As the papers by Mansoor (2010) and Arshavskaya (2015) show, CW L2 can be adapted to make learners more motivated, even when CW itself has initially demotivated the learners. In particular, a simplified series of CW used with scaffolding can build up confidence in language ability, which in turn leads to better performance in CW. It is hoped that these syntheses can offer some guidance to teachers and other professionals contemplating how much and what type of CW activities should be implemented in L2 classrooms in Sweden, especially years 7-9 and upper secondary.

To draw more specific conclusions about CW and its impact on AL and motivation would require significant amounts of additional quantitative and qualitative data. In particular, our study has been limited by the absence of empirical studies done in Sweden involving groups of students in the age groups for years 7-9 and upper secondary. Moreover, one frequently occurring practice in our studies is for teachers to produce research papers on their own CW L2 activities. In our set of papers, Dougherty (2015), Zhao (2014), Lee (2020), and Gómez (2016) fall into this category. Therefore, we urge caution because of the possibility that the teacher-researcher could consciously or unconsciously have influenced the learners towards specific results. Finally, sample sizes in the research papers are generally small among the articles we found, and there is

no use of control groups. The use of control groups would have significantly boosted the data's reliability by indicating what would have happened in the absence of an intervention.

With that in mind, it would be logical to call for a research project that minimizes the weaknesses identified above. This would involve a study of the effects of CW on AL and motivation in L2 classrooms in Sweden for years 7-9 and upper secondary. Like the studies considered in this paper, such a study would involve CW L2 interventions evaluated by surveys and student reflection. To the extent that it is practically possible, the project would have researchers independent from the teacher and use control groups. For instance, an independent researcher could identify a test group and control group with similar learner and teaching environment characteristics and then devise a series of CW activities in collaboration with the test group's teacher. After the activities are implemented in the test group, any changes in AL and motivation would be compared to the control group. This would help rule out the possibility that the changes would have occurred even without the intervention.

Resources

- Arshavskaya, E. (2015). Creative Writing Assignments in a Second Language Course: A Way to Engage Less Motivated Students. *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, 10, 68–78.
- Avramenko, A.P., Davydova, M.A., & Burikova, S.A. (2018). Developing creative writing skills in a high school ESL classroom. *Training, Language and Culture*, 2(4), 55–69.
- Carrió-Pastor, M. L., & Mestre Mestre, E. M. M. (2014). Motivation in Second Language Acquisition. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116(1), 240–244.
- Ching, L. C. (2002). Strategy and Self-Regulation Instruction as Contributors to Improving Students' Cognitive Model in an ESL Program. *English for Specific Purposes*, 21(3), 261–289.
- Choi, T. H., & Wong, W. C. C. (2018). “Platform Nine and Three-Quarters” and More: Scaffolding ESL Writing through Teacher Modelling and Creative Imitation. *TESOL Journal*, 9(4).
- Digitaliseringsrådet (2018). *En lägesbild av digital kompetens*. Stockholm: Digitaliseringsrådet.
- Disney, D. (2014). *Exploring Second Language Creative Writing: Beyond Babel*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dougherty, P. (2015). Creative Writing in English and EFL Students: Finding Motivation in Self-expression. *East West Journal of Humanities*, 5, 1-14.
- Gardner, R.C. (1982). Language attitudes and language learning. In E. Bouchard Ryan & H. Giles (Eds.), *Attitudes towards language variation* (pp. 132-147). London: Edward Arnold. Cited in Carrió-Pastor & Mestre Mestre (2014).

- Gómez, S. (2016). How working collaboratively with technology can foster a creative learning environment. In A. Pareja-Lora, C., Calle-Martínez & P. Rodríguez-Arancón (Eds.), *New perspectives on teaching and working with languages in the digital era* (pp. 39-50). Dublin: Research-publishing.net.
- Henry, A., Korp, H., Sundqvist P., & Thorsén, C. (2018). Motivational Strategies and the Reframing of English: Activity Design and Challenges for Teachers in Contexts of Extensive Extramural Encounters. *TESOL QUARTERLY* 52(2).
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Joris, P. (1999). [Nomad Century Ahead]. *boundary 2*, 26(1), 152-155.
- Kormos, J. (2012). The role of individual differences in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(4), 390-403.
- Lam, A.S.L. (2016). Review of “Exploring second language creative writing: Beyond Babel. Dan Disney (ed.). 2014. Amsterdam: John Benjamins”. *World Englishes*, 35(3), 483-485.
- Larsson, E., & Westberg, J. (2019). *Utbildningshistoria*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Lee, S.-M. (2019). *Her Story* or their own stories? Digital game-based learning, student creativity, and creative writing. *ReCALL* 31(3), 238–254.
- Lundahl, B. (2012). *Engelsk språkdidaktik. Texter, kommunikation, språkutveckling*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Mansoor, A. (2010). Teaching Creative Writing to University Level Second Language Learners in Pakistan. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, 7(3), 201–218.

- Parr, J. M., & Timperley, H. S. (2010). Feedback to writing, assessment for teaching and learning and student progress. *Assessing Writing*, 15(2), 68–85.
- Qiu, X., & Lee, M.-K. (2020). Regulated learning and self-efficacy beliefs in peer collaborative writing: An exploratory study of L2 learners' written products, task discussions, and self-reports. *System*, 93.
- Rowinsky-Geurts, M. (2010). Creativity and Writing: The Postcard Project. *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, 3, 43–48.
- Seker, M. (2016). The Use of Self-Regulation Strategies by Foreign Language Learners and Its Role in Language Achievement. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(5), 600–618.
- Skolverket (2000). *Språk : Grundskola och gymnasieskola. Kursplaner, betygskriterier och kommentarer*. Stockholm: Skolverket and Fritzes.
- Skolverket (2018a). *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educare*. Retrieved November 20, 2020 from <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.31c292d516e7445866a218f/1576654682907/pdf3984.pdf>
- Skolverket (2018b). *Curriculum for the upper secondary school*. Retrieved November 26, 2020 from <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=2975>
- Skolverket (2018c). *Syllabus for the upper secondary school. Subject: English*. Retrieved 13 December from <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.4fc05a3f164131a74181056/1535372297288/English-swedish-school.pdf>
- Stegner, W. (2002). Creative Writing. *New England Review*, 23(3), 100-110.

- Sylvén, L., & Sundqvist, P. (2012). Gaming as extramural English L2 learning and L2 proficiency among young learners. *ReCALL*, 24(3), 302-321.
- Tarnopolsky, O. (2005). Creative EFL Writing as a Means of Intensifying English Writing Skill Acquisition: A Ukrainian Experience. *TESL Canada Journal*, 23(1), 76-88.
- Teng, L. S., & Zhang, L. J. (2018). Effects of motivational regulation strategies on writing performance: a mediation model of self-regulated learning of writing in English as a second/foreign language. *Metacognition & Learning*, 13(2), 213–240.
- Tok, Ş., & Kandemir, A. (2015). Effects of Creative Writing Activities on Students' Achievement in Writing, Writing Dispositions and Attitude to English. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174, 1635–1642.
- Zhao, Y. (2014). L2 Creative Writers' Identities: Their Cognitive Writing Processes and Sense of Empowerment. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, 11(3), 452–466.
- Zimmerman, B.J, (2002). Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner: An Overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64.

Appendix 1

Examples of terms searched:

MAIN TERM	RELATED TERM 1	RELATED TERM 2	RELATED TERM 3	RELATED TERM 4	RELATED TERM 5	RELATED TERM 6
L2	ESL	EFL	English as a second language	Second language	Language learner	Engelska som andraspråk
Creative writing	Creative text	Creative writing activities	Short stories	Fiction	Fanfiction	Kreativt skrivande
Autonomous learning	Learner autonomy	Independent learning	Self-regulation	Självständigt lärande	Självreglering	
Motivation	Disposition	Attitude	Inspiration			
Confidence	Self-efficacy	Självförtroende	Självförtroende			
Curiosity	Learner interest					