

CAN WE SHARE THIS UMBRELLA:
EXPRESSIVISM IN FIRST LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE
CLASSROOMS

by

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ABSTRACT

As an educator of first and second language learners, I have implemented an expressivistic approach to the writing of composition. Expressivism is one manifestation of the process theory of writing. While the research on first language learners and second language learners, or L1 and L2, remains a bit uneven, I have considered what has been researched and have attempted to draw connections from there. After implementing some of these expressivistic approaches in both classrooms, I have dedicated a section of my thesis where these responses are included. These responses represent my willingness as an educator to show rather than just tell readers about my research.

The first chapter of my thesis contains existing research on both L1 and L2 learners. I outline four principles of expressivism in the introductory section. These principles are short-circuiting; embracing the authentic, personal voice; the physicality of writing; and showing not telling. It is important to note that these four principles only represent some of the many principles lying underneath the umbrella of expressivism. This section chronicles what has been tested and found to be true of both first language learning and second language learning.

The second chapter of my thesis contains student responses from L1 and L2 learners illustrating their written reactions to these four principles of expressivism. The last section of the second chapter provides an arena where conclusions are drawn and introspection occurs.

CHAPTER 1: L1 AND L2 RESEARCH

Close your eyes and don't let yourself write down any words until you can actually see and hear and touch what you are writing about.

To hell with words, see something.

Peter Elbow's words, as quoted in Miller 113, suggest writing is more than just the physical act of placing pen to paper. His words hint around and wink towards a more expressivistic approach to writing and the teaching of it. In this quote, Elbow describes writing as a bodily experience. For Elbow, the process of writing involves the body, mind, and soul. "Seeing, hearing, and touching" all are antecedent to the actual writing process. Elbow suggests a couple of key principles of an approach known as expressivism in this quote. Expressivism encompasses an umbrella of thought. Its many components complement the process theory of teaching composition. While many expressivistic principles exist, I have chosen to anchor this research with four. I refer to these four principles as short-circuiting; embracing the authentic, personal voice; the physicality of writing; and showing not telling. In the opening quote, Elbow is encouraging writers to ignore or short-circuit what they have been traditionally taught. He entices writers to feel, see, and hear writing in a different way. Writer Natalie Goldberg also speaks of this short-circuiting principle when she writes:

Writing too, is ninety percent listening. You listen so deeply to the space around you that it fills you, and when you write, it pours out of you...Listen with your body, not only with your ears, but with your hands, your face, and the back of your neck (52-53).

Goldberg refers back to this quote and adds:

Besides opening and receiving what was said, this kind of deep, nonevaluative listening awakens stories and images inside you. By listening in this way you become a clear mirror to reflect reality and the reality around you (53).

Goldberg's quotes combined illustrate two principles of expressivism. The first of these is short-circuiting. She is urging readers to listen through every channel of their bodies. Goldberg is recognizing that writers often write as a means of discovering their histories and personal stories. Once writers discover this voice, they are able to move past the personal point and move closer to their surrounding environments. A willingness to embrace the authentic, personal voice and use this voice to draw connections between the self and the self's discourse community are essential to expressivists and their teaching methods.

Elbow's quote at the beginning of this piece illustrates the physicality of writing, which is another principle of expressivism. Writing is not a passive activity, but one requiring sweat, rearranging of ideas and comfort levels, and maybe even blood if the writer is lucky. Elbow's not just pushing words around when talking about the writing process. He is in the middle of the fight pushing as well as being pushed.

Writers also find Natalie Goldberg warning, "Writing is physical" (50). Writing gives writers a chance to work their ways out of themselves and create more of a whole. Expressivism not only calls for writers to get physical with writing, but writers need to get physical with readers, too. In other words, writers need to show not tell with their discourse. This is another principle of expressivism. Goldberg writes, "Don't tell readers what to feel. Show them the situation and that feeling will awaken in them" (68).

Expressivistic writers need to use language that invites readers in, while fooling readers into believing the writer's experience was their experience. Reciprocal penetration between writer and reader needs to occur for the discourse to work. Keeping these four principles of expressivism in mind, let's slightly turn the focus and begin looking at what researchers have found in L1 and L2 classrooms. As an educator of first and second language learners, I have taken an interest in researching the look and feel of both classrooms.

Tony Silva speaks of an existing pedagogical connection between first language and second language in "Second language composition instruction: developments, issues, and directions in ESL." Silva writes, "There is no doubt that developments in ESL composition have been influenced by and, to a certain extent, are parallel to developments in the teaching of writing to native speakers of English" (Silva 11). First language composition pedagogy has been caught in what Maxine Hairston has called "the winds of change" for the past thirty years (113). The pedagogical change occurring is significant to L1 and L2 learners, because the change affects the ways in which educators define their teaching philosophies, affecting the students' learning process. Prior to the pedagogical change, teaching philosophies in ESL instruction were greatly influenced by a theory known as bottom-up, or product oriented processing. In more recent decades, top-down processing has been elbowing its way into the limelight. Top-down processing takes the bottom-up process's focus and readjusts it to center on the writer's process instead of the writer's final product.

David Nunan gives the simplest explanation of bottom-up and top-down processing, applied to listening, in his textbook, Language Teaching Methodology where

he writes: “the bottom-up view, which suggests that successful listening is a matter of decoding the individual sounds we hear to derive the meaning of words and thence utterances; and the top-down view, which suggests that we use discursal and real-world knowledge to construct and interpret aural messages (Nunan 63). In first language writing pedagogy, this dichotomy has been paralleled by a shifting of focus from the written products of students to the process of students writing. The newer process approach is more interested in how the writer navigates through the various components of discourse, like planning and revising. The process approach is interested in revealing how the writer gets from one point to another when creating discourse. The older product approach looks to students’ final products. The product approach is not as interested in how students get to the product. The interest lies more in the product itself, and how good the product is in terms of patterns of organization, spelling, and grammar (Kroll 8). While L2 research has not been as active as L1 research concerning the process approach, Vivian Zamel and Raimes are two pioneers in second language research who have suggested that less of a focus should exist on surface-level errors and correctness. Both Zamel and Raimes encourage their second language colleagues to “learn from first language composition theory, practice, and research and to apply effective first language techniques to second language writing instruction (Krapels 38). Boundaries have been redefined and what was once thought to work in the classroom is being rivaled by more process-oriented methods.

As a means of questioning the appropriateness of expressivistic teaching to L1 and L2 learners, I intend to look at the classrooms of both first and second language learners. Paired with this, I will concentrate on what researchers of first language

learning have found and what second language researchers have found concerning this process-oriented method using expressivistic teaching methods. Advocates of expressivism, which is one manifestation of the composing process approach, include Donald Murray, Ken Macrorie, and Peter Elbow. These expressivists have all based portions of their first language research on how they personally write as educators and writers. They write concerning what they know to be true of their writing and teaching processes. Similarly, David Nunan, a second language researcher, writes in regards to his concern about the research within the second language realm:

It seems to me that a great deal of research in our field is conducted in contexts where classroom noise either is unheard or is considered irrelevant and therefore removed from the equation before the numbers are added up and their significance determined. This lack of contact with the reality of the classroom has driven a wedge between researcher and practitioner which threatens to become a gulf unless steps are taken to bridge it (41-42).

Nunan understands the need to bridge the gap between “theory and practice, and between researcher and teacher.” As a means of upholding this tradition, I will include data collected from my own research as an educator of L1 and L2 learners. It is logical that paradigms would have to alter in order to accommodate new, innovative methods. We must change to preserve anything honest and true. We can not hide from change, but we can turn our sails to use its wind to glide smoothly into a shifting paradigm.

The writer is on a search for himself. If he finds himself he will find an audience, because all of us have the same core. And when he digs deeply into himself and

is able to define himself, he will find others who will read with a shock of recognition what he has written (Murray, A Writer Teaches Writing 4).

I don't wish to separate product from process or conclude that one approach is better than the other. Instead, I would like to speak briefly of the components of both product and process while providing a tighter focus on expressivism, which is one approach to the process method. Robert Gorrell's article, "How to Make Mulligan Stew," reflects this belief that a healthy respect and connection needs to exist between the product and the process approach. He understands the importance of distinguishing between process and product. Gorrell writes, "the product can give us the most tangible information we can get about at least part of the process. Analysis of the product reveals the goal or end of the process, and directs us to specific parts of the process that we can investigate" (Gorrell 100). Gorrell goes on to say:

I don't want our view of the composing process to become so narrow that we neglect difficult but useful parts of the process or fail to take advantage of analysis of the product for its value in illuminating the process. The problem is to find out all we can about how you get from an empty refrigerator to an edible stew, from a blank sheet to paper and a relatively unfocused mind--if not an empty one--to a readable essay. You can't learn to make a stew just by examining or even eating one, but neither can you learn to make one if you don't know what you're trying to make--any more than you can come back from where you've never been (103).

While I, like Gorrell, contend that product and process need each other to produce any type of discourse, I do believe in the merits of expressivism when teaching composition to L1 and L2 learners. Expressivism as a philosophy became popular in the

late sixties and early seventies. Educators of this method can range anywhere from non-directive to directive in teaching methods. Non-directive educators insist that writing can not be taught, while directive educators implement a more direct approach creating syllabi and writing assignments meant to maximize student self-discovery. The emphasis is on self-discovery and linking students to the outside world by means of identifying with the inner world. Expressivists “desire to have writing contain an interesting, credible, honest, and personal voice” (Fulkerson 5).

Writing is a concept that has a tendency to get pigeonholed, much like expressivistic teaching methods. People fail to recognize all the different facets contained underneath this umbrella of writing and expressivism. Instead of just redefining the goal of writing, we, as educators, need to move closer to filling in the gap between teacher and student. While this is a slow process and requires patience, recognizing the problem brings us closer to finding a solution. Seeing the merits in all the philosophies making up the paradigm is crucial. However, as an educator and learner, I am in this to express. I feel there is so much concentration on what others say that indirectly we are silencing ourselves. Each student has an abundant amount to say but these words have been silenced since a young age. An expressivist sees more shame in this silence than expressing out, sharing what you need and want to say.

James Berlin’s essay, “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories,” traces expressivistic roots back to Emerson and the Transcendentalists. In Expressivism or Neo-Platonism, truth can not be measured by what is seen, because what an individual sees is constantly in flux and, therefore, unreliable. Platonism teaches that “truth is instead discovered through an internal apprehension, a private vision of the

world that transcends the physical” (Berlin 15). Central to Platonism is the belief that “man is brought to the truth” (Berlin 15) rather than truth being brought to the man. This theory hints that truth can be discovered but not communicated. While truth is something we learn, we’re not capable of being taught it. Truth is located within the individual, reached only through an internal apprehension, a private vision of a world that goes beyond the physical. The writer is the only one who can discover this truth. The object of writing is to connect with the personal and to express one’s individual voice.

Expressivists believe “truth is conceived as the result of a private vision that must be constantly consulted in writing” (Berlin 15). This portion of Berlin’s essay echoes the expressivists’ reliance on the constant, recursive principle of good writing. The writing is intended to be personal and part of a revival where writers discover their authentic voices. Berlin mentions James Milller and Stephen Judy’s argument stating “all good writing is personal, whether it be an abstract essay or a private letter,” and that an important justification for writing is “to sound the depths, to explore, and to discover” (Berlin 25). Miller and Judy justify these beliefs by further explaining that “form in language grows from content--something the writer has to say--and that something, in turn, comes directly from the self” (Berlin 15).

In the same essay, Berlin refers to the findings of Ken Macrorie. Macrorie uses the phrase “Telling Truths” to express a similar belief. Macrorie believes that a writer must be “true to the feeling of his experience” (Berlin 15). Writers, especially, possess a private sense of things. Skilled writers have the capacity to center themselves at the core of communication and speak with the outside world from this private place using their authentic voices.

Expressionist theory places an emphasis on student interaction with each other. The classroom is built around the need for student dialogue and interaction. Berlin believes the purpose of this “is to get rid of what is untrue to the private vision of the writer, what is, in a word, inauthentic...” (16). Again, a characteristic of an expressivistic educator is trusting students to be honest when interacting with each other. The purpose of this classroom interaction is to help “the writer get rid of what is false to the self, what is insincere and untrue to the individual’s sense of things...” (Berlin 16).

It is important to note that James Berlin is not the biggest advocate of expressivism. This same article provides criticism of expressivism, which I will briefly discuss. The root of Berlin’s opposition to expressivism is “that their [expressivists] conception of truth can in no way be seen as comparable to Plato’s transcendent world of ideas” (15). Because the recognition of this truth is exclusively dependant on individual experience, Berlin sees expressivism as promoting a falsely political theory, because expressivistic theory focuses exclusively on the individual consciousness instead of social reality. According to expressivists, there can not be any understanding of the outside, social world without a discovery of the inner self. For Berlin, writers discover truth through exposure to the outside, social world. The expressivistic principle where by truth is found only within the individual and totally divorced from his or her social surroundings is what disturbs a social epistemologist like Berlin, who finds personal truth through the social realm.

Because of this deep emphasis on the self discovering its own truth, expressivism is the most poetic and romantic of all of the philosophies. Knowing who you are is a key to unlocking many doors. Expressivism allows for the most creativity, because a

perception of what the writer believes or sees outside of the object's physical self is occurring. Individual perception is important to the expressivists, or the literary exhibitionists.

In Sondra Perl's essay, "Understanding Composing," two important questions are asked: "What basic patterns seem to occur during composing" and "What does this type of research have to tell us about the nature of the composing process?" Perl recognizes the recursive principle of writing. She disagrees with the traditional notion that sees writing as a linear process. Perl believes writing moves over and under itself, shuttling back and forth through the writer's mind and paper. This recursive movement helps writers discover how their discourse will unfold. Perl states, "writing is a recursive process...recursiveness in writing implies that there is a forward-moving action that exists by virtue of a backward-moving action" (Perl 101). Perl, like Peter Elbow, looks at the writing process as three dimensional rather than one dimensional. In his essay, "Embracing Contraries in the Teaching Process," Elbow discusses the physical nature of the writing process. Elbow writes:

Part of the job is to get the subject matter to bend and deform so that it fits inside the learner (that is, so it can fit or relate to the learner's experience. But that's only half the job. Just as important is the necessity for the learner to bend and deform himself so that he can fit himself around the subject without doing violence to it. Good learning is not a matter of finding a happy medium where both parties are transformed as little as possible. Rather both parties must be maximally transformed--in a sense deformed. There is violence in learning. We can not learn something

without eating it, yet we can not really learn it either without letting it eat us (69).

Elbow brings writing into a more physical realm with his quotes. Elbow's two quotes express the need for writers to get physical with their discourse and subjects. Like Perl, Elbow believes that the writing process involves all of the senses, possibly to the point of sensory overload. Perl, too, believes writing "draws on sense experience" (101).

"The backward-moving action" that Perl describes is what the writer returns to in the beginning stages of their writing. According to Perl, this move is "not to any words on the page nor to the topic but to feelings or non-verbalized perceptions that surround the words, or the what the words already present evoke in the writer" (Perl 101). This move begins inside the writer and moves to what is physically felt. Perl refers to this action as felt sense. Eugene Gendlin, a philosopher at the University of Chicago, originally used this term. Gendlin describes felt sense as:

the soft underbelly of thought...a kind of bodily awareness that...
can be used as a tool...a bodily awareness that...encompasses
everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given
time...It is felt in the body, yet it has meanings. It is body and
mind before they split apart (35, 65).

Felt sense is experienced most when writers pause to reread over key words, waiting patiently for what is vague to make sense. Writers wait and follow these senses with the intention of creating a clearer direction to their discourse. Perl believes that felt sense "is the internal criterion writers seem to use to guide them when they are planning, drafting, and revising" (Perl 102). When writers relax and short-circuit, their discourse is

being given the chance to take its own direction and explore. When this happens, their felt sense is occurring. Perl believes that felt sense could be taught. The writer must be willing to pay attention to the events happening within them, recognizing the sound of their authentic voice, knowing how to communicate their histories and stories with the greater community. Perl writes, “when it’s working, this process allows us to say or write what we’ve never said before, to create something new and fresh...” (Perl 102-103).

Perl refers to the writer’s act of calling up their felt sense as being retrospective structuring. This process is what helps a writer move from incoherent pieces of discourse to a more coherent whole. While creating this whole piece of discourse, the writer becomes both discoverer and builder. The acts of discovery and constructing occur simultaneously. Coherent discourse seems to emerge from a place once considered unrecognizable and strange. This place appears strange and unrecognizable to writers, because it is a place they have rarely visited. This place is where their inner, authentic voices lie. It is the voice writers hear faintly, but have gotten into the habit of ignoring. It is the voice reminding writers their words can rise to greatness and while writers rarely listen, this voice gives writers the strength to continue to create in the eyes of opposition. Perl writes, “when we are successful at this process, we end up with a product that teaches us something, that clarifies what we know, and that lifts out or explicates or enlarges our experience” (Perl 103).

Perl describes another aspect of the writing process essential to all writers. Projective structuring is the writer’s ability to relate their intentions to others. While this structure has a stricter focus than retrospective structuring, it shares the same spotlight and is equally important to the writing process. Projective structuring focuses on writing

for an audience and the mechanics of grammar. At this point, the writer must disconnect from their words and ideas and become the reader. Perl is careful to represent both retrospective and projective structuring as being equally important to the writing process. Retrospective structuring places writers in a position where they are called on to focus on the events of the inner world. Projective structuring finds the writer focused on the outside world, taking into consideration the needs of the reader, who represents the writer's connection to the outside world. Perl believes, "both show us the fallacy of reducing the composing process to a simple, linear scheme and they leave us with the potential for creating even more powerful ways of understanding composing" (Perl 105).

In direct relation to Perl's explanation of felt sense, William Stafford writes concerning his own writing process, "If I put down something, that thing will help the next thing come, and I'm off. If I let the process go on, things will occur to me that were not at all in my mind when I started. These things, odd or trivial as they may be, are somehow connected. And if I let them string out, surprising things will happen" (Stafford 13). While Stafford never uses Perl's terminology, he is describing a point in his writing process when he short-circuits, tunes out, and, ultimately, lets go. Stafford isn't concerned with the disjunction of the words or the shape the words are going to take. Stafford sits down, writes, and lets the pen move automatically, moving to the beat of his thoughts and images taking shape before him. His explanation as to why he doesn't allow himself to get caught up with the final product is, "Now I am headlong to discover. Any distraction may harm the creating" (Stafford 13).

Stafford describes this unraveling or "spinning out" as being "mysterious" (13). Writing is a process a writer places faith in, not insistence. He writes, "At times, without

my insisting on it, my writings become coherent; they lead by themselves to new connections.” (Stafford 13). He describes writing as:

A scope for individuality, and elation, and discovery. For the person who follows with trust and forgiveness what occurs to him, the world remains always ready and deep, an inexhaustible environment, with the combined vividness of an actuality and flexibility of a dream. Working back and forth between experience and thought, writers have more than space and time can offer. They have the whole unexplored realm of human vision” (Stafford 14).

Stafford’s views on writing seem to reflect the importance of trust to writers.

Echoing back to Platonic views, truth can be found within individuals. This truth requires trust for what will emerge, and Stafford’s beliefs mirror this. In Perl’s essay and likewise Stafford’s, there is a lot of writer realization going on: realizing what’s inside, waiting for the time these feelings will materialize into words, relying on intent to figure out what’s right and what’s wrong in the writer’s discourse. Patience is essential to expressivism. If writers are willing to wait, then not only the words, but cohesion will come, maybe not every time, but sometimes. Faith and trust, two components not usually used to describe a writer, also play important roles in the expressive mind. Writers need to ignore the apprehension and strive towards self-trust and faith in what they will discover through their words.

Lester Faigley’s essay, “Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal,” spins parallel ideas to Berlin’s essay, “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories.” When speaking of the expressive theory, Faigley cites D. Gordon Rohman and Albert Wleche’s study done in 1964. The point of the study was to prove

that a difference exists between thinking and writing. The study focused on the effects of “pre-writing” on writing performance. Rohman and Wleche believed that “thinking was different from writing and antecedent to writing; therefore, teachers should stimulate students’ thinking by having them write journals, and construct analogies” (Faigley 151). This study is one credited with overturning the current-traditional paradigm. Their conclusion urged teachers to encourage students’ thinking processes with journal writing and meditation prior to writing assignments.

Rohman sees “good writing” as “the discovery by a responsible person of his uniqueness within his subject” (151). Rohman’s definition is reminiscent of a more romantic type of expressivism, when qualities like integrity, spontaneity, and originality appealed to the writer (151).

Rohman defines “bad writing” as “an echo of someone else’s combination which we have merely taken over for the occasion of our writing” (151). Rohman’s definition of bad writing points to the risks educators take when they require students to write about a topic that holds little or no meaning for the student. Educators run the risk of receiving a piece of writing that has been forced, regurgitated and submitted for their approval. Again, educators need to recognize the merit and necessity in learning what others have said, but not to the extent that their students are silencing themselves. Students have multitudes to say. As long as the words of others who have come before lead students to their own discourse, educators should encourage it. The current expressionistic rhetoric have redefined writing as more “democratized,” and an act most, if not all, can perfect. Currently, expressionistic rhetoric is concerned with the individual uncovering their inner, authentic voice. Berlin writes, “It is an art, a creative act in which the process--the

discovery of the true self--is as important as the product--the self discovered and expressed" (Berlin, "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 688).

Sommers' essay, "Between the Drafts," encourages readers to take a personal look at an accomplished writer's struggles against the merits of personal and academic writing. When Sommers assumes this "researcher" persona, it sets up a next to impossible task for her. She becomes intimidated and standoffish with the material she is reading. Sommers remains unable to settle in with the researcher's findings. As a result, readers of Sommers essay are able to identify with her struggles.

Not only does Sommers stress the importance of connecting with ourselves, but setting up that balance of our ideas shaped, but certainly not set, by secondary sources, while recognizing our own personality brought to our craft. By writing this essay, Sommers has made a conscious effort to connect with her reader. She pulls readers in, lays them down, and tells them a story of a woman who is beginning to discover her own voice and authority nestled within that voice. Sommers shows her readers her struggles as a skilled writer. She makes readers hear her authentic voice that she has discovered and continues to struggle with.

At one point in the essay, Sommers relates a story to her reader describing when her father taught her German. The whole point of telling the story is to show readers that he didn't just teach her German in order to know another language, but he taught it to her in a manner far removed from the context of life. The same thing will happen if composition classes narrow students' focus, their accomplishments, and their experiences to essay writing. We can at least save the students from becoming robots to their fellow peers, families, and cultures. Sommers writes, "Words can be retracted; souls can be

reincarnated” (Sommers 220). Nothing is irreversible, whether it is words or souls. Nothing is written in stone and everything can be reinvented, reconciled, and reworked. Sommers launches writers into a spiritual understanding of writing. Understanding how writers manage to bring their lives into their writings will continue to escape researchers.

Early glimpses of ESL composition can be traced back to 1945 (Silva 11). While many approaches to ESL writing have been implemented, four approaches are considered the most influential emerging from 1945 to the present time (Silva 11-12). These approaches are controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for academic purposes. Of these four approaches, I am most interested in examining the process approach.

The process approach seemed to emerge from a great “dissatisfaction with controlled composition and the current-traditional approach” (Kroll 15). People met both of these approaches with opposition. Those opposed to both approaches agreed that neither controlled composition nor the current-traditional approach encouraged expressivistic thought. In fact, both of these processes seemed to discourage creative thinking and writing. This opposition began ushering in a feeling that “writing is not the straightforward plan--outline--write process that many believe it to be” (Kroll 15). Once this opposition arose, ESL educators began focusing on first language research on the composing process. Vivian Zamel believes that, “ESL writers who are ready to compose and express their ideas use strategies similar to those of native speakers of English” (Kroll 15). The composing process began to be viewed as a “non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (Zamel 165). This ESL shift redefined composing as

“expressing ideas, conveying meaning. Composing means thinking” (Raimes 261).

Silva writes of this shift in the composing process of ESL writers: “From a process perspective, then, writing is a complex, recursive, and creative process or set of behaviors that is very similar in its broad outlines for first and second language writers” (Kroll 15-16). Silva contends that importance of creating an effective writing process is essential to any writer. He writes, “The writer is the center of attention--someone engaged in the discovery and expression of the meaning; the reader, focusing on content, ideas, and the negotiating of meaning, is not preoccupied with form” (Silva 16). Silva concludes that none of the four approaches are grounded in theory and credible research. He recognizes “the limits of theory and research in ESL composition at present” (Silva 20).

As Silva concludes, there is not as much research on the appropriateness of expressivistic teaching methods in the second language classroom as exists in the first language classroom. As has been seen, the L2 classroom has experienced the paradigm shift in terms of top-down and bottom-up processing. The paradigm shift occurring in the composing process of L1 learners is often spoken of in terms of product and process. Top-down processing can be expressively approached, because it represents a more learner-centered curriculum, while bottom-up processing focuses on stimuli not connected personally with the writer. While research is scarce on this topic, there have been some significant findings. Patricia Carrell’s article, “A View of Written Text as Communicative Interaction: Implications for Reading in a Second Language,” looks at the value of texts as they function in “communicative interaction” (23) rather than just studying texts “as units larger than sentences, or sequences of sentences” (23). Carrell is looking at the text’s place in a cultural society. In other words, what does the learner

bring to the text, rather than the antiquated notion asking, what does the text bring to its reader? What does it mean to consider the text in a cultural aspect, though? Instead of focusing on the text alone, the focus tends to be more on the people of a particular culture. Placing the text in this new, cultural light represents another way the text is moving away from product and moving more toward process. This realization proves again that the pedagogy is indeed shifting. Carrell, reiterating what researchers de Beaugrande and Dressler argued in 1980 and 1981, explains:

A central notion of their argument is that textuality--what makes a text a unified, meaningful whole, rather than merely a string of unrelated sentences--lies not in the text per se as some independent, artificial object study, but rather in the social and psychological activities human beings perform with it. A text is viewed as the outcome of various procedural operations, and as such, cannot be adequately described and explained in isolation from the procedures humans use to produce and receive it (23).

This quotation places the readers in an active position in the learning process. This quotation is not only concerned with the learner's final product but, rather, is more concerned with what the learner brings to the learning process. The researchers use the word "isolation" here to describe something that the writing process is not. The writing process is slippery and incapable of being defined in a single term. Writing relies on the learner's tradition and spirit, combined with their exposure to the target language and a need to learn.

Carrell sees reading, which combined with writing represent both sides of the literacy issue, as an “active, interactive process between the reader and the text” (24).

While this idea has only recently been considered, Carrell writes:

Early work in second language reading, specifically ESL reading, assumed a rather passive, bottom-up view of second language reading. Second language reading was viewed primarily as a decoding process: a reconstructing of the author’s intended meaning via recognizing the letters and words, and building up a semantic representation of the text’s meaning from the smallest textual units at the bottom to the largest at the top (24).

This quotation concerns itself with the passivity, not the activity of learner. Its focus is on the author’s intent, not on the learner’s intent. Carrell’s words describe a method concerned with replicating robotically what the learner sees before them. Problems arose in direct relation to this emphasis on the decoding method. According to Carrell, the psycholinguistic model of reading began nudging the bottom-up process from the spotlight approximately ten years ago. She cites ESL specialists like Eskey, Clarke and Silberstein, and Coady as pioneers who began considering ESL reading as an active process. Not until 1979, though, did a genuine top-down approach appear. Carrell writes of this updated top-down approach:

...not only is the reader an active participant in the reading process, making predictions and processing information, but everything in the reader’s prior experience or background knowledge plays a potential role in the process. Lest the top-down view of second language reading

be taken as a replacement for the bottom-up, decoding view, several researchers have recently emphasized that efficient and effective second language reading requires both top-down and bottom-up strategies operating interactively (24).

Carrell is speaking of the physicality of literacy in these last two quotes. She is calling L2 writers out of passivity and into action, which is a common principle of expressivism. The latter part of this quotation proposes a merger of both approaches. It is not asking the ESL teacher to forsake one approach for the other. It is merely suggesting the possibility of both approaches existing within the same pedagogy. It is possible to take the best aspects of both approaches and create a “new” method urging our ESL students to rise to their highest potentials. Through Carrell’s words, we see that unlike the bottom-up view, which places the writer’s intent at the center of learning, the new method embraces the relationship of both the writer and the reader. She explains the importance of both reader and writer in terms of the similarities both share when she writes, “the background knowledge of the writer and the reader, as well as the writer’s assessment of the background knowledge of the reader, the communicative intentions of the writer, and reader’s assumptions about the communicative intentions of the writer” (24-25).

Let’s move to an examination of the expressive school in second language learning. These teachers taught that writing was about sincerity and originality. They taught that the students should be using their writing as a springboard, getting in touch with their inner feelings and beliefs. Joy Reid in Teaching ESL Writing explains how the

focus changed between expressive methods and more traditional methods of teaching when she writes:

Focus in the classroom turned away from the final product, the structuring of essays and correction of errors, to concentrate on creativity and self-discovery “freely,” without the consequences of grammar evaluation, teacher imposed topics and structures, critical comments, and often, grades. The use of freewriting and discovery supplanted impersonal prose, literary analysis, and the concentration on the product of writing that had existed in previous decades (Reid 4).

Research seems to conclude that L1 and L2 learners benefit from expressivistic teaching methods. Expressivistic principles including short-circuiting; embracing the authentic, personal self; the physicality of writing; and showing not telling, all seem to apply to L1 and L2 learners alike. As the Romantics did, expressionists define good, effective writing as being conceived through the elements of integrity, spontaneity, and originality. Peter Elbow, one of the leaders of the expressive school, defines good writing, as “writing that does not follow rules, but reflects the processes of the creative imagination” (qtd. in Faigley 152). In other words, writers’ words move forward in a stabbing motion, cutting through the false starts and dead ends as a means of striving toward an end where the writer finally discovers what he or she is trying to say and with what words. Perl writes, “...a felt sense will shift if you approach it in the right way. It will change even as you are making contact with it. When your felt sense of a situation changes, you change and, therefore, so does your life (102-103). Expressivists believe that, “writers must feel for the answer in their bodies” (105). Am I expecting too much

from an ESL student? How should I expect them to be able to open up through their writing when they feel closed off and isolated from the new culture? Or, is expressive writing the key urging them to loosen up, open up, and tune out? David Ausubel, an educational psychologist, believes, “The single most important factor influencing learning, is what the student already knows.” Again, I don’t believe there can be one right answer. One question that constantly haunts me concerning second language students is how paramount is their need to use personal writing for anything in their lives? Are we just teaching them a useless task? Should they just be introduced to the basics and passed on from there? I have a healthy respect for the traditional pedagogy: those teaching concepts have been used for decades and for the most part they do the job. As Ausubel claims, students bring with them the single most important factor of learning: what they know. Regardless of culture, sex, or race, writers know themselves. They know their histories. The expressive teaching approach harbors this authentic voice, providing an anchor for writers who may drift during discourse. This approach loosens up the soil allowing writers to explore deeper for what they are struggling to say beyond all the silence. As an educator of expressivistic teaching methods, it is a start to teaching students about the writing process. It allows students to understand that their words don’t have to be permanent. They need to have the freedom of knowing they can change their minds. I hope to see a classroom that has struck the fine balance between tradition and expression, a pedagogy that will combine the open road with home and the spirit with the human.

CHAPTER 2: SHORT-CIRCUITING

Am I guilty of telling rather than showing my students about Perl's felt sense? Up until now, the reader may wonder. The following section will discuss how I have implemented expressivism in L1 and L2 classrooms. I teach developmental writing courses to undergraduates. Because these students are developmental, they approach my classroom with traceable opposition. These students have been told they have problems with their writing, and they bring this knowledge into the developmental writing course. They enter with walls of opposition firmly in place. I try to scale these walls down to gates in the twelve weeks we write, share, and listen as a class. Journal writing is an essential part of my classroom. Journal writing is the outlet through which most students short-circuit or let go in their discourse. When I refer to the action of short-circuiting, I am referring to the process by which writers ignore what they have been traditionally taught about the writing product approach, while trying to approach writing in a more sensory light. That is, writers try to relax enough so that they are capable of seeing, hearing, and touching their discourse before ever writing it. This requires a certain amount of tuning out or short-circuiting. The writing that emerges from the students' journals is insightful and retrospective. My students engage in on-line journal writing as well through newsgroups and e-mail. I use these newsgroups as another vehicle, enticing the students into sharing what they may not have gotten the chance to share in the classroom. The newsgroups work well for the students who are not as inclined to speak in the classroom on a daily basis. These students feel more comfortable sharing with the newsgroup. These newsgroups represent their peers, but in a different, less immediate sense. Through journal writing, the students can work things out, give a voice to the

inaudible, and move past their silence. I've taught novels like *Frankenstein* and *On the Road*, as well as non-fiction books like *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, an account of a Mayan Native American woman and Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*, which is a writer's instructional manual advising writers to "write anyplace" (101). Goldberg's *Bones* provides an open window into the writing process of a skilled writer. I trust with each journal response, paper response, and classroom discussion, students are honestly making an effort to let go, short-circuit, and just write.

The goal of the first journal assignment is based on the students' perception of good writing. During the discussion, the students discover they can define good writing. The goal is to immerse them in a conversation discussing their opinions of good writing. This discussion leads them to their own working definition of good writing. I'm attempting to unveil what they know to be true of good writing. This recognition will set up personal guidelines to help them create good writing. The purpose of the journal assignment is two-fold: I want students to begin thinking along the lines of what they know to be true about their role as writers. Second, I want students to realize that poetry is a genre of literature they can use as a means of achieving the critical reading and writing skills of the composition classroom. Getting in touch and making peace with the inner voice is my way of scaling their walls down to gates as a means of changing the way they view composition and their potential as writers. And, these qualities are at the core of expressivistic teaching methods.

The first journal assignment I ask my students to write centers around Dr. Julie Brown's poem, "Good Writing." Brown's poem explains the speaker's definition of

good writing metaphorically. In order to grasp a better understanding of what students are hearing, I have included some lines from Brown's poem:

Good writing is a glass of water on the thirstiest day of my life.

It is the first time I heard Carmina Burana and my skin separated itself from my body.

It is a rock in my shoe.

It is the moment I was baptized, immersed in water and the Holy Spirit.

It is the Stigmata.

It is seeing the Pacific Ocean as a baby and immediately crawling into the green sheet of a wave.

Good writing is like crime, it makes us happy; it is like the noose, it prevents us from being unhappy.

It is the familiar taste of your mouth.

Concluding from these lines, Brown uses metaphoric images to define good writing. At times, these images are contrasting and fuse two very different ideas together in the same line. For example, the poet writes, "Good writing is like crime, it makes us happy; it is like the noose, it prevents us from being unhappy...It is the taste of salty skin, the sound of my lover's breath in darkness, the delicate nape of his neck, the smell of his hair, the sleek curve of his jaw." I instruct the students to select a phrase, image or word from Brown's poem and build the journal entry around it. I ask the students to question why they selected what they did, considering it is a rather lengthy poem. I don't give them a copy of the poem; rather, I recite it to them three or four times. I suggest they just listen

the first two times, allow themselves to be pierced in the third reading, and a fourth time to be stunned by what has already pierced their memories. The following are some responses to this assignment.

In response to Brown's line, "Good writing is the sound of a gunshot that pulls me from sleep," the student responded, "Poetry, for me, is a gunshot that pulls me from sleep. It is an awaking to different ideas and beliefs. It is a sudden, loud sound that wakes me up in the middle of a dream, but still leaves me with the peaceful feeling of dreamland. Poetry is soothing to my soul, yet it has the power to awaken me to something unknown."

Another student responded: "Good writing is learning a new French word." "I choose this image to relate to the difficulty of good writing. Learning French is hard because you know what you want to say but, often it doesn't come out the way you want it to. The interpretation can be changed and people can misunderstand your meaning. After time and hard work, the word choice and meaning will begin to be understood." Clearly, this student is describing good writing in terms of what she finds difficult. She compares the process to the difficulty of learning a foreign language: the frustration of knowing what you want to say but not being able to say it the way you want to say it, while the meaning continues to be lost during translation. Notice how this student has hope, though. She recognizes that writing does not just descend upon a writer. She recognizes good writing is a product of "time and hard work." This student realizes her active role in the writing process. She realizes she must get physical with her writing as a means of improving the quality of her discourse.

Another student compared good writing to images that conventionally would not be considered “good.” The student writes: “Good writing is being extremely frustrated and never getting better. Good writing is like being trapped in a box with no oxygen. Good writing is like being caught in a trap, and having to chew your leg off to get out. Good writing is not getting caught.” These words depict scenes of struggle and despair. This student views good writing in the same difficult light. However, this student remains hopeful. He must chew his leg off, but he’s still alive, he has done something, but he didn’t get caught. This student knows there is a way towards good writing like there is a way out of each difficult situation he described. He is determined to produce good writing. He knows it is possible even in the eyes of opposition.

Another student wrote in response to Brown's line, “It (good writing) is a rock in my shoe,” “I picked this part because good writing can be rough and maybe a little painful sometimes. It’s a struggle to remove ideas from your head, but when it all comes out you are finally relieved when its finished.” These words convey a sense of relief through writing for the speaker. Even though writing is “a struggle” initially, the end results in peace of mind for the speaker.

While these responses depict writing as a frustrating and desolate act, this student compares good writing to something as familiar as the taste of her mouth, “Good writing tastes like my mother’s food.” This student is enticing her reader with the sense of taste. She is appealing to her reader by attempting to show rather than tell her definition of good writing.

Another student selected Brown’s line “Writing is a rattle snake yawning on hot flat stones.” The student responded: “I choose this image because it describes writing as

being a release. It's giving an example of when you finally release your thoughts and emotions on paper or into words and you feel calm and relaxed. When you are done with releasing thoughts, you feel like you've accomplished something. You've transformed your internal thoughts to external feelings." This student admits that there is something to release through writing. The student understands the connection being made between the inner and outer worlds. Being able to express what's inside appears essential to this student and writer.

The following student responses conjured up images of frustration and difficulty. They equate good writing with situations that have caused struggle and opposition in their lives. The student responded: "Good writing is...emotion, not for sissies, full of release, and resolve, a means to an end, and opening of a new chapter, and a closing of an old one, letting go of all your inhibitions, to let strangers into a part of you, see scars, and healed wounds of lives lived, good writing is life, it is who you as a spirit are, it is real." In this passage, good writing is compared to "scars, a new chapter, and the end." All of these images are connected to one another across time and each can cause the next or happen as a result of the other. This student sees good writing as being connective. Expressivists respect this connection and approach it from the inside, which is similar to this student's approach. She taps into her inner world and emerges with her own definition of good writing.

Another student replied: "Writing is like the pain in my ass that Preparation H won't take care of. Writing is like running down the street naked, feeling fine, but exposed. Writing is like some sex, it wasn't quite what you expected. Hope you get rid of it. Good writing is like a party, and I wasn't invited." This student defines good

writing in terms of memories that have left him feeling uncomfortable. Many of the scenes involve embarrassment at the hands of others. Part of students' apprehension towards writing is fearing what their peers will say about their thoughts and words. The possibility to expose and to be exposed through writing is intimidating to writers. Expressivism encourages writers to relax before producing discourse. Relaxing allows writers to reach within. If writers are in constant fear of embarrassment, they will never be able to connect with their outside audience. Hope can be drawn from this student's response, because he realizes his fear, and wants to move beyond it.

Another student apprehensively defined good writing when he wrote: "I don't know what good writing is. I don't think there is an actual definition of good writing...In the poem, the writer describes good writing in terms of different pleasures and pains. Some people may wonder what these images have to do with good writing. I think good writing is anything you want it to be. It can't be the same for everybody...If you can paint a clear picture for someone who is reading your paper, and then the writer has achieved good writing. When I write, I don't worry much about spelling and punctuation as much as I worry about what I am trying to say through my writing. I go back later and fix it, but if I correct every error while I am writing, I will lose my train of thought and forget what I really need and want to write." This student identifies the slippery nature of writing in his response. He defines writing as an individual experience that is recursive in nature. That is, he composes without worrying about the order the words will take. This sentiment echoes William Stafford's quote earlier in this piece. This student hits on two of the four principles of expressivism: discovering the authentic, personal voice and relaxing and trusting words enough to just let them come out through discourse.

I sometimes asked the students to form groups and combine their individual responses with the responses of their peers. The goal of this is to acquaint the students with each other and share different interpretations of what good writing is. The exercise really seems to work because it encourages the students to see how many different ways an individual can interpret good writing. They begin to understand that defining good writing is slippery and means different things to different people. The following list resulted from the combined group project:

Group One

Good writing is like Seinfeld or your favorite band in concert.

It is like YSU winning the National Championship or the Super Bowl.

The Last Supper, or missing the winning free throw in a basketball game.

It is like a keg of beer or a hangover.

It is like a wedding or Disney World.

It is like sex or playing the trumpet.

It is like sales at the mall, the Christmas Holidays.

Your best friend dying of cancer and the pain.

It is like a nail going through your palm.

An eyelash in your eye that won't come out.

Eating liver, talking clearly, finding a good parking space on campus.

Eating chocolate cake and getting a goodnight sleep.

It is like having no homework, or rest.

Eating a candycane or turkey dinner with mashed potatoes and gravy with stuffing and corn.

Group Two

Good writing is a well-built man with a hard chest and a tight butt.

Good writing is having justice served.

Good writing is making the Dean's list.

Good writing is finding a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

Good writing is seeing a child open a present on Christmas morning.

Good writing is facing the Boogiemán.

Good writing is receiving a perfect diamond.

Good writing is having an abusive partner burn in hell.

Group Three

Good writing is confessions of the soul.

It is a five hundred-dollar hooker.

It is the thrill of a comeback victory, the agony of defeat.

It is a candle-lit dinner.

It is having to urinate but nobody wants to take a five-minute break.

It is a three-hour pencil drawing that gets smeared in your sketchbook.

It is a racial slur.

It is not being able to write something with a deadline coming up.

It is urinating anyway.

Clearly these students have captured the metaphoric language Brown uses to convey her definition of good writing. They have captured their own images of love and hate when developing individual definitions of good writing. The students have successfully taken a writing prompt and interpreted it in their own words and images.

They have written about personal memories and have applied these to Brown's metaphoric images. These students have allowed themselves to let their personal voice speak to them. They have relaxed and short-circuited enough to equate good writing with their personal opinions and thoughts. Their images show instead of tell readers their definitions of good writing and these students are ready to get physical with their words and the writing process.

When I brought this same poem into the L2 classroom, students responded in different ways from the L1 learners. Second language students seemed to define good writing more in terms of correct grammar and proper sentence structure, than in terms of personal accounts and memories. Some of the responses I received were:

“In my opinion, a good writing is when you can express all your ideas about what you want to explain or express. Therefore, many writers have to have a lot of imagination and knowledge about many things (topics). Also, they must have a deep feeling in which they can transmit their own ideas to the readers. Consequently, the readers by that way, will feel what does the writer want to express in his writing.”

“Good writing is that feeling when you reach your goal in life just because you take your ideas to others, so they can associate you with the way you think.”

“In my opinion, a person is a person who can write and explain clearly his ideas with easy words. On the other hand, a good writer has to have a good topic. For example, a good paragraph must begin with topic sentence, and the body can have two or more small paragraphs with good examples also these have to touch the people. A good writer has a good imagination, also.”

“Good writing is when you express your ideas in the correct way. As when the reader knows exactly what they think and they feel and can express to the reader.”

“I think the most important thing about good writing is how much I can express my feeling or how much the others can get something from my writing...I think good writing is like music. I play the piano and it is what I want to continue in my life. Music is not about performing, it is heart-touch to people. So when I play the piano, I must show my feelings and I want them to learn something from my playing. That’s the same thing for the good writing. For me, it is the best way to tell people what I feel.”

“I think good writing is like a quiet world that we must find and read it. I think everybody should write what he or she is thinking because writing feels comfortable. Writing is a good friend for alone days and return into the past. Papers can speak and they are your friends.”

Second language students seem to be more prone to defining good writing in terms of correct grammar and sentence structure more than first language students are. There did exist some similarities, too. Both sets of learners realize the importance of writers in communicating their message to their audience. Also, some second language students compared writing to other activities and hobbies, while others mentioned writing as a vehicle to express and reach out. For the most part, though, using this exercise in the second language classroom, I found students reacting to Brown’s metaphoric language with anxiety and unrest. Some students could not understand how writing could even be compared to crime or the sleek curve of a lover’s jaw. Most of the second language students could not draw the connection between Brown’s metaphoric references. Students commented that they were disadvantaged because they didn’t know

more about the English language and culture. They pinpointed that as being one of the major problems they had when trying to understand Brown's poem.

Another medium implemented in my developmental composition class is newsgroups. Newsgroups are posted on the web and accessed by any person who has e-mail. Each of my students was given e-mail addresses at the beginning of this quarter. Once all of us subscribed to the newsgroup, we began posting responses and comments to these responses to the newsgroup. I have been using newsgroups as another vehicle of communication between my students. The following excerpts are taken from student responses after reading Donald Murray's essay, "So You Want to Be a Writer?" In this essay, Murray defines himself as a writer. He advises the reader that "the only instructor you need--and this from one who taught and publishes textbooks on writing--is the evolving draft. Write, then listen to what you have written and you will hear what needs to be written." (28). Murray's tone is a familiar one. He advises, "Don't tell it, write it" (26). I asked the students to respond to the most familiar aspect of this essay through newsgroups.

One student commented, "I find it hard to get into certain kinds of writing...Murray was basically telling us that anybody can write. He was saying that being paid for your work does not make you a professional writer. Even though you may not receive money for something you may write and still be considered a writer...While reading this article, I learned that what some people may consider to be different may be what makes a person special. There is no limit to what a person can and can not do. He tells us to just let your mind be free, and take it from there. Just let your imagination lead the way...Maybe I feel I can't write because I keep saying it. Maybe if I just stop saying

that I can't and start writing, maybe it won't be so hard for me. It might be all in my mind. Maybe I can write. I just didn't know until now." This student has captured the main idea of Murray's article. She recognizes the possibility that maybe she can't write because she's never really tried. Perhaps, she has talked herself into believing something ridiculous and untrue, because her negative voice was speaking louder than her authentic voice. Knowing how to write is something she has become content with not understanding. Towards the end of her commentary, though, she seems willing to at least try. She believes in the possibility of writing and using the imagination to become whoever she wants to be. She moves smoothly between summarizing Murray and adding her personal reaction to the piece. This motion is essential to expressivism.

Another student responded, "Murray's essay was pretty good. I know there are many things that I hate doing until I'm almost done doing them. For example, going to church. It's boring for awhile but once the last hymn plays you know you've done the right thing. Going to school is the same thing. When you first get there it sucks, but when you start listening it's not so bad. Going to work is the same thing, once you get there its boring but after a certain time, you sort of relax..." This student has extracted Murray's sentiments and has succeeded in bringing them in a little closer to home, welcoming Murray's words into a more familiar place. In doing this, he sees a connection between skilled and unskilled writers.

This student wrote, "Murray said that the same things that make us weird are our strengths. I believe that's true--a lot of things that I think are bad about myself really are what make me who I am. I feel he makes that point really well. I think more kids who have a tough time fitting in should read this essay. It would give them hope and maybe

faith that their situation will improve.” These words stand as evidence that some personal searching has been occurring in this student's life. He has started to hear his authentic voice, and it manifests itself in response to Murray's piece.

After reading some essays on the approaches of some skilled writers, a couple of students responded: “My writing process is a mirror of my life. Everything I do in life has to be performed to my fullest potential... Whether I am figuring out a chemistry problem, or dusting the room, I try to pay close attention to the little things... When I draw or write, I start out with a basis, and I decorate and embellish it with as many possible details and baubles as I can... I scribble down anything that comes to my mind, and I try to make sense of it later.” Some of these ideas belong to the expressivists' camp. During the writing process, this writer pays attention to the smallest of details. She doesn't think, she just writes and trusts her discourse will fall into place later in the writing process. She short-circuits and writes with detail, while her pen continues to move through the whole process.

Another student wrote: “My own writing process is one I have just recently discovered. It involves one simple rule that I use to stimulate the creative portion of my mind into thinking more openly about things. I call this process, “getting rid of stale thoughts.” It is a process that allows me to see all things in a different ways than I normally would... I begin by going someplace noisy... I just sit there a while and consume as much as I possibly can. I notice everything, from what people are wearing to what they are doing. This part is critical, because I must try not to see things as I normally would, but to look deeper... Inspiration may come from one of many everyday noises we know are there, but we often ignore... This process has helped me to develop in everyday

life. It helps me to “see things in a different light.” These two students' responses are expressive in nature. Both are aware of the importance of detail and the ability to relax enough to perceive with all the senses. These students feel their way through and try to see something they've never seen before.

The following student realizes that through the act of writing, she can express everything and anything. She makes a distinction between writing and speaking. The last three responses, whether they speak of difficulty or ease, all defined good writing with an authentic voice. A connection between the inner and outer worlds has been struck. These responses recognize writing like an expressivist would. Writing is a vehicle of expression, a means of discovering the self, and a tunnel into the inner world, connecting it with the outer world. The student wrote: “Good writing comes from deep within the soul. When writing something, no matter what it may be, you can express every single thought and emotion you hold within yourself. Writing gives you a chance to really think about what you need and want to say. On the other hand, when speaking, we seldom get the opportunity to think first about what we are trying to say. Anything is possible when you are writing. Good writing comes from the heart...”

Earlier, I mentioned my students have read full-length books. I, Rigoberta Menchu is a non-fiction account of a Native American woman, who tells her story of oppression and violence. Students responded vigorously to Menchu's account, because many were able to relate to the oppression Menchu and her culture endured.

I asked the students to respond to the following question: In Menchu's culture, “the importance of the mother is related to the importance of the earth,” and “the sun is our grandfather.” I asked the students if any connection existed between what we

consider a mother and a father with how Menchu's culture describes each. I asked them to draw connections between what our culture thinks of the roles of mother and father and how Menchu's culture describes each. One student responded by saying, "I associate the sun with the beginning of life. It is the center of our solar system and life revolves around it. The sun is like our ancestors so their idea about being a grandfather is close to mine. The earth is like our immediate family. It, like a family, is close to us and without it, we wouldn't be here. I think their beliefs are very close to what we consider mother's and grandfathers." This student draws a close connection between Menchu's interpretation of mother like sun and a grandfather like the earth. He compares the earth to his immediate family, which he relies on to help him maintain existence, and the sun, which represent the beginning of all life, which is similar to be the job of a mother. This student recognizes how different words can symbolize similar ideas, even when the words are different. This student relates what she knows about her culture to what she has read about Menchu's culture, which is one of the key principles of expressivism.

Students were asked to relate to Menchu's oppressive struggle. The student responded, "Yes, I feel connected to Menchu's struggle because there are times when I have felt the same way. People have said hurtful things to me and I have laughed, but they really weren't funny, in fact they hurt. One of my brother's called me 'dumb,' and I have taken it, even though he laughs, it's not funny." This student has identified a time in his life when he played the role of the oppressed. His wounds have turned into scars, much like Menchu's experiences. Both Menchu and this student have lived through different forms of oppression, but they share the same hurt and humiliation. This student has not only shown the reader these scars, he has clearly recited the voice of his authentic

self.

This student's account found the student in the position of both the oppressed and the oppressor. As he reflects back, he was able to conclude that, like Menchu's, his situation could have possibly been avoided. Both he and Menchu responded in a defensive manner because they sensed the majority of people were against them. He brilliantly draws a connection between Menchu's culture and his situation when he responded: "It wasn't a serious fight and no one got hurt, but nevertheless, I feel I could have avoided the whole situation if I would have relaxed. I guess in a way I was also the oppressor to some degree. I responded the way I did because I felt like everybody was against me, therefore, I was against everybody. I think this is also true with Menchu's culture, because even though her culture was oppressed, she and her culture were also oppressors because they won't accept the other culture and hated them for this difference and ignorance."

When asked to discuss universal truths discussed in Menchu, one student responded, "The universal truths Menchu speaks of are connected to what I believe. They are connected because growing up, I was faced with discrimination everyday and will continue to be for the rest of my life. I look at discrimination as a universal truth because it exists no matter how much it's pushed aside." This student has dealt with oppression her whole life. She used this journal response as a way to express her feelings. True, other opportunities may have afforded her a chance to express these feelings, but perhaps she felt a bit more connected reading Menchu's account first, recognizing the oppression of another race, seeing the similarities form a common bond.

My students read Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. They were asked to pick a couple

lines from *On the Road* and respond to them. A student chose the following lines from On the Road: “With the bus leaving at ten, I had four hours to dig Hollywood alone. And this was my Hollywood career-this was my last night in Hollywood, and I was spreading mustard on my lap in back of a parking-lot john” (102). The student responded to Kerouac's words with the following sentiment: "This passage reminds me so much of the last night I spent in California. I really hate it for that reason. I wasn't sitting in a parking-lot making sandwiches, but I was more or less alone watching TV and eating ice cream. There were three other people in the house, but none of them could talk to me and actually be interested in what I had to say, so I didn't talk to them much either. I was leaving the wonderful city of San Diego and I hadn't done half of the stuff I wanted to in the two weeks I was there...I still had fun in California, but it could have been a lot better. I would do it again if given the chance." This student seems to have experienced much the same disappointment that Kerouac has. Both, though, were resilient and, though disappointed, were able to express gratitude. Many students struggled with *On the Road*. They said the jargon was a sign of the writer's times. They were not familiar with the Beats or their time period. However, this student and the following student were able to connect their lives with Kerouac's and formed their own meaning from his text.

Another student questioned the existence of the American Dream after Kerouac's account chronicled in *On the Road*. The student wrote: “As I read the book *On the Road*, many thoughts about life ran through my head. I began to realize people's quest for the American dream never ends. Kerouac takes the reader on an unforgettable trip across the United States. He gives the reader a first hand experience about friendship, love, and life. But, what exactly was Kerouac looking for? Is the American dream the same for all of

us...As I finished the book, I began to ask myself what the American dream represents and why it is so important to us. Kerouac found his dream. He traveled across the United States in search of what he thought America had to offer. In a way, I think he found what he was looking for. He made everlasting friendships. He found his true self. He faced fears and overcame them. In order to find your American dream, I think this is necessary. We need to be aware of who we are. We need to be able to make mistakes and learn from them.” Both of these students connect their lives with the writers. Both of these students relate their own lives to Kerouac's in a very real manner.

When given the option to map out his own *On the Road*, a student wrote the following account of his *Walden/On the Road* experience. This student applied one piece of literature to another and intertwined them both to create his own text. This student short-circuited and let go in his piece. He saw his opportunity to get physical in relation to what he had read, and he approached his discourse with an equal amount of zeal. He wrote: “Did you ever wonder what it would be like to take a trip, but never leave your local town? You can do that, but the only way it is possible is if you were to be open. Also, you have to be willing to let your mind run free and creatively. Your friends can go with you, but they must be as open as you are, or the experience will not be as good. As in Kerouac’s book *On the Road*, the writer embarks on an adventure, where the reader is invited to come along and rough it with little money or comforts of home like Kerouac. Henry David Thoreau’s book *Walden* finds the speaker in the same predicament as Kerouac. The speaker is roughing it but he is not really going anywhere...It is rumored that the woods are haunted and I wanted to overcome this fear. They say that if you stay in the woods a day, you become a man...I never noticed how the dying sunlight cut

through the trees, giving the forest a fiery glow. I have no choice but to look at the incandesce glow. The sun is gone finding the sound of night close on its heels. With night, come sounds I've never heard before. I try to calm down but I can't. My heart is racing and I see visions every time my eyes close: horrendous creatures and demonic trees that looked friendly in the light...The whole forest seems to be looking at me and I begin to twitch. With my mind frozen in terror, I look into the cave. I can't see in front of me. I had to get out of the forest or I was going to lose my mind. I knew I had to go when I looked in the cave and felt peace for the first time since the sun left me. At that moment I believed the forsaken cave could save me from insanity. Compelled I walked or rather weakly hobbled into the cave...I never heard anything but I felt something tearing about my skin. The claw ripped my body onto the ground, and I felt a warm trickle of blood on my neck, cutting of the blood supply to the rest of my body. The beast's mouth let its fangs bite into my throat. As I felt myself dying, I wondered if this was the peace I thought this cave would give me."

In order to demonstrate student responses of the physicality of writing, I instructed the students to be walked around blindfolded for a short time on campus and write a paper about the experience. The object of the assignment was to encourage them to perceive their outside world through another sense besides sight. I wanted the students to think about how little they use their other senses. I wanted them to think differently about something for a little while, and most importantly, give them an opportunity to get physical with the writing process. The student responded: "Total darkness is the only sight that some unlucky people have to live with each day of their lives. Being blind would be a huge challenge in one's life. To taste the bitter reality of being sightless, I

went through the journey, blindfolded, just to experience what everyday life would be like without eyesight. It was very interesting and made me more aware of how exhausting and lifeless it would be not to see. I relied on many other senses on my journey especially smell and touch. I think, now, that sight is the most significant and useful gifts we have. In the next few paragraphs, I will capture the essence of my 'walk through campus,' describing in detail my thoughts and emotions on this eyeless experience...The loud sounds of machinery from the nearby construction site overpowered everything. The piercing noise of the industrial power tools resonated throughout my ears...I disliked the feeling of not being in control. I wanted my eyesight back..."

The following excerpts were taken from another assignment based out of Menchu's book. I asked the students to write papers on their customs or traditions. Their goal was to welcome the reader in so well that the reader would feel like a member of the writer's culture for the duration of the writer's discourse. Their responses were: "According to the British anthropologist, Edward B. Taylor, the term 'culture' refers to 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.' The aspect of culture consists of 'behavioral rules' that are passed down from one generation to the next...My culture has been inherited from my grandparents, mother and aunt, who brought the Italian culture from Italy when they moved here. The Italian culture consists of many traditions but, in my family, the most essential are our religious beliefs and celebrations of holidays and food."

'Certain traditions are respected.' I picked this quote from I, Rigoberta Menchu,

because it goes along with my family's culture in more ways than one. I have learned a lot in my life about the importance of family and holidays. To me, family is the most important aspect of my life and should never be pushed aside for any reason. In my culture, we are taught this, and it is very disrespectful if you do not follow this. My grandparents were both from Italy and came to America on a boat in the early 1900's. Together, they have nurtured a very close and well-rooted family... This holiday always goes too fast, but we always make great memories. So, I have brought you aspects of my culture through my memories and words. Being a part of my culture is a great honor, as you can understand being you, the reader, has your own culture, too. Like Menchu, I have been taught to respect certain traditions and always be grateful for where I came from and be thankful for the family I belong to."

"Traditions from the old country are still going strong today in my family. They started in Italy and were brought here in 1956 when my grandparents came to America. These traditions are very special to me because they bring the whole family together. On holidays, you will find everyone jam-packed into my grandma's Cape Cod house, eating until they practically pass out! My grandmother is the one who keeps the family close, Old Italian traditions alive, and the stomachs full... If somebody is sick or doesn't feel well, we call Nana for a remedy. She will usually whip up some pastina or noodle soup that I swear is better than any medicine. One of her many customs she brought here is home growing her own vegetables. A huge garden engulfs the backyard of her home. She grows everything from zucchini to cherry tomatoes... Those are the only ones she eats, because she won't let us buy them in the store. All of the traditions are still flowing

on her property, and when someone steps foot on it, they think they have just entered Italy.”

In all three accounts, the students, like Menchu, hold their families, cultures, and traditions in the highest regard. They cite all three as being important and self-defining. They recognize their pasts and histories, which is pivotal in whom they have become thus far. Recognizing the importance of the past is an essential feature of expressivism. This recognition allows the writer to move on to the outside, future world.

Second language learners were also asked about their interpretations of their cultures and traditions. Often times, it's difficult as an educator to get L2 students talking in the classroom, let alone writing. While L1 students have a tendency to silence themselves in the classroom setting, L2 students are even more apprehensive but for different reasons. When L2 students are given a chance to write and speak about their cultures and traditions, though, they begin to open up and allow their apprehension and silence to fall away. When given the opportunity to express their beliefs and ideas, L2 as well as L1 learners end the silence and begin to communicate with themselves, each other, and their discourse communities.

The following student response came from an L2 student who is addressing the advantages of being bilingual or multicultural. The student responded: “There are many advantages and benefits of being bilingual or multicultural. The first of all, you can communicate with other people who don't have the same culture. Second, you can expand your knowledge. Third, you can travel throughout the world. Finally, you can teach your children languages that are beneficial to them.” This excerpt was taken from the introductory paragraph from his essay. He later elaborated: “Knowing another

language is very beneficial because you can communicate with other people and you can know about their customs and their cultures. Furthermore, you can meet other new people who are able to show you new things...” This essay continues in the same tone. The student refers back to the introduction regularly, while elaborating on each point. Asking this student to write about his experience of being bilingual and multicultural has prompted a nicely constructed piece. While I didn’t include the piece in its entirety, the excerpts I have included illustrated this L2 student’s willingness to write about something he knows. He has consulted what he knows because of his own history as a bilingual and multicultural individual. He draws from this experience to create a clear essay. Like L1 students, he has focused on his own story and has written discourse through his personal, authentic voice.

The following student was asked to write a response addressing his thoughts on social customs and traditions. The student responded: “People in every country have their social customs and these social customs are similar or different from country to country...In my culture we have three meals during the day. Breakfast includes milk, eggs, yogurt, cheese, and jam and the main meal is lunch, which mostly consists of vegetable dishes. In the evening we have dinner which is the same as breakfast and usually after lunch or dinner people eat fruits and desserts...” In this next segment, the student compares his tradition to that of Scottish tradition: “The relationship between members of the family in Lebanon is very strong and in Scotland it is too. In Scotland before a wedding, the bridegroom’s friends take her on their shoulders and they play music. People who get married should be from the same religion and all the weddings are performed in the church. During the wedding they have a party with a small dinner

for family and friends. Some people wear the national costume, the kilt. In Lebanon, people must also be from the same religion and before the wedding there is a small lunch for friends and family. In Lebanon, it is the groom who is carried on his friends' shoulders or by cars to the place where the wedding is taking place..." This L2 student successfully is making a connection between his culture and Scotland's culture. The beginning of the essay finds his discourse mostly talking about what he knows, which is his Lebanese culture. Halfway through his discourse, he begins drawing a connection between his inner world, Lebanese culture and traditions, and the outer world, which in this case is Scottish culture and traditions. This student accomplishes what one voice of expressivism asks, which is start with what writers know and from that point draw a connection to what is less familiar and comfortable. This student draws a connection between Lebanese and Scottish culture by anchoring his discourse in what he knows, while spinning out to encompass what he's not as familiar with.

The next responses were taken from students addressing their definitions of family and marriage to their specific cultures. The first student responded: "Family should be built on a mutual respect. Marriage is the most essential tool that strengthens family bonds among individuals. Moreover, there are many advantages to marriage. The most important advantage is having companionship and someone to spend your life with, second is having children, and finally sharing responsibilities. Companionship creates an important role in our daily spiritual comfort as well as in our physical activities. For example, having a wife to come home to every day, sharing in all the challenges in life, and seeing someone smiling all are optimistic aspects of companionship. Having children will definitely provide a pleasant environment for all the members in the

household. This happy atmosphere creates a strong bond between a man and his wife. Children should express their love to their parents as they grow older as much as the parents gave them love in their younger ages...” As the earlier L2 example illustrated, this response too, finds the student moving from personal points in the introductory paragraph to further elaboration of these points throughout the body of the discourse. The importance of both excerpts is that both the introductions and the bodies of these pieces exist because of the willingness of each writer to consult their personal opinions and thoughts on a particular subject. Both writers build organized essays around personal beliefs and opinions concerning the intended subject matter. In another response addressing the appropriateness of different religion marriages, the student wrote: “Marrying from a different culture can be beautiful because it gives people of different religions and cultures the chance to mix with each other. Some countries have strict rules against this kind of marriage and people from different religions are forbidden to marry each other in these countries... To me, people exist in life to build the earth and use all the devices that may lift them to their higher ground. So, people must like each other and face their struggles, and marriage helps people to accomplish this.” Again, this student clearly understands the difference between what is expected in his culture and what is preferred. While this student realizes that his culture expects same-religion marriages, he believes marriage encompasses more than just the religion of two people. He is capable of exercising his personal thoughts on marriage in this response. While they are not the same as his culture’s, he feels comfortable enough to disagree in his discourse and in an expressivistic atmosphere.

Recently, I was presenting a paper on expressivism at the Rhetoric Society of America. An audience member asked me how exactly I link personal writing to more academic forms of writing. I explained this link as best as I could. If writers are never given a chance to listen and identify with their personal histories, they can not be expected to know how to listen and identify with other histories and identities. Coming to accept other traditions and cultures is an essential part of personal growth. If students are never given a chance to discover and retell their personal experiences and opinion in a developmental classroom, the opportunity may be lost, aborting any possibility of a connection forever. Whether students are L1 or L2, both know what they want to personally say. As an educator, I am willing to give students a platform for this expression. From this platform, students will be more receptive to place these experiences and personal accounts in a broader arena, relating the personal to the less personal. Relating their personal words with other writers' words will help link personal, expressive writing with traditional, academic writing. It is important whether students are L1 or L2 to recognize that the direction of their writing can change. Students need to realize they can approach writing from many different directions and angles.

In conclusion to what I have seen as a result of my research, I do acknowledge that I have accumulated more L1 material than L2 material. I have worked with L1 students longer and there has been more research done on the composing process of L1 students. There hasn't been an abundant amount of L2 research done on expressivistic teaching methods and my research represents a small step in a long journey. I was able to conclude that first and second language learners share similarities and differences. Second language learners seem to have more difficulty when responding to metaphoric

language. Culturally, they are not as conditioned to the American classroom. As I concluded, their journal responses were quite different than the first language learners. Second language learners were concerned with correct grammar and sentence structure when responding to Brown's poem "Good writing." First language learners were more willing to try out their felt sense and wear an expressivistic hat for twelve weeks. Short-circuiting; embracing the authentic, personal voice; the physicality of writing; and showing not telling are all principles of expressivism that my thesis has anchored itself with. Individually, these student responses did not contain all four of these expressivistic principles. At best, these responses contained one or two of these principles. When looked at holistically, however, these responses are evidence of students' willingness to apply all four of these expressivistic principles to their discourse. Whether students are in a L1 or L2 classroom, they are willing to write about what they know and what they feel. It is a starting point where further academic writing can emerge. These responses find L1 and L2 writers interacting with the text and emerging with a clearer sense of their histories and personal voices. These students have allowed themselves to be ravaged by writing. These student responses show rather than tell their receptiveness to get physical with language, playing the role of both the bruised and the bruiser. Their words do not encourage passivity but activity. These students draw the reader in and deliver what their words promise. As an expressivistic educator, I recognize that expressivism represents an umbrella of thought meaning different concepts to different people. My principles may not be the same as another expressivistic educator. My goal was to offer a few ways to approach expressivistic teaching methods, which foster process-oriented goals. The truth is there isn't an easy way to become a writer, and expressivism isn't the only answer.

Expressivism combined with other approaches is what educators should be striving towards.

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