TRANSLATING WRITING WORLDS: WRITING AS A POET, WRITING AS AN ACADEMIC

Jane Spiro

Sue Dymoke

INTRODUCTION

As writers move between poetry and writing in and for their subject disciplines, it is interesting to ask whether the adaptations they make are mainly ones of language and discourse, or whether they reflect something fundamental about the selves they are revealing. How far does the traversing of different audiences and communities constitute a change in writer identity? Research into the second language writer suggests that each language represents a different "self" which is not necessarily translatable (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Writers such as Hoffman (1989) and Milosz (2000) describe this as a sense of compression and alienation, as the meanings which are clear in one language become untranslatable in the other. A similar process of transition and acculturation takes place as academic writers move from one subject discipline to the other. Becher and Trowler (2001) explore the notion of subject disciplines as communities of practice to which academics claim membership by reflecting its dominant discourse and internalizing their culture and values. In straddling two such communities, writers commute, often painfully, between discourses and the different values which underpin them.

Ivanic suggested in 1994 that research into writing had tended to "disregard writer identity," but that the link between writing identity and how this is constructed through

discourse is a critical area for further research (Ivanic, 1994, 1998). This chapter addresses these links between discourse-level choices and core identity as a writer by sharing the reflective testimonies of seventeen writers who are both poets, and academic writers across multiple subject disciplines, including history, social studies, lexicography, botany, creative arts, technology and English literature. All these writers identify themselves as actively developing their practice across academic-poetic divides and publishing in both domains. In sharing their testimonies, the seventeen poet-academic writers offer us insights into how they experience these dual discourses, and by what processes they negotiate the differences. We consider the way these writers adapt their message as they cross from one community to the other, and the different aspects of themselves they choose to express with each audience. As each writer shares aspects of their writing history, we are also able to ask why, how and at what personal or professional cost they traverse these two writing worlds, and what is lost or gained in translation between the two.

Our principle research questions in this study are;

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

- What aspects of themselves are revealed, or concealed, as they move between these audiences?

- What parallels are there between these writing transitions and those of second language writers?

- How might these findings inform the teaching and learning of second language writing?

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

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writers have made explicit to varying degrees the process by which a text becomes their own, or to use terminology often adopted by writers themselves, by which they "find a voice" or make a text authentic. Some describe the moment at which a text becomes "real" for them. Heaney describes the moment when he finished his first poem: "I felt that I had let down a shaft into real life" (Heaney, 1980, p. 41). Cox and Thielgard describe this moment as the "metaphorical confrontation" with self that turns a cluster of words, phrases or scenes into driven writing that is a form of self-representation (Cox & Thielgard, 1987, p. 45). Although the link between writing and self-representation takes on different forms and shapes for each writer, many writer testimonies describe the search for "a deep connection between inner life and the words on the page" (Hunt & Sampson, 2000, p. 16). Virginia Woolf describes successful writing when "it has not crushed the thing I wanted to say, but allowed me to slip it in, without any compression or alteration" (Woolf, 1929, p. 91). What is interesting to note in our study, is whether and how this connection between the writing self and the inner self is equally potent in the academic context as in the creative/poetic setting from which these quotations derive.

Research into the processes of academic writing has increasingly made this connection between deeper "selves" and discourse choices. Barton, Ivanic and Hamilton (1999) examine

the connection between writing literacies and identification with a community of practice. As writers define their community, so too they tend to shape their discourse in order to assume membership (see also Gee, this volume). Becher and Trowler compare academic disciplines to tribes whose structures are partially visible at the surface –such as language and discourse patterns – but partially "hidden" such as underlying values, beliefs and practices (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Just as belonging to two tribes may entail a conflict between belonging and alienation, so too making a crossover between disciplines may be experienced as problematic and even subversive. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) apply these processes of movement from one language culture to the other, in a way that parallels Becher and Trowler's accounts of disciplinary transitions. As the movement between one language and another creates an "interlanguage" which may constitute a third identity, so traversing the discourses of poetry and academic writing may entail the construction of a hybrid identity that is neither quite one nor the other. Such transitions may reveal, not differences between the two "languages" but the part of the writer that remains the same: their values, responsibilities and messages as a writer, whether in the first or second language, first or second culture. Saunders (2003) suggests that the practiced writer in both poetry and research share a responsibility not just to "tell it like it is" but to add a deeper sounding" (2003, p. 185). Whatever choices we make as writers, whether subliminal or conscious, they are "value constituting" (Richardson, 1997) and value-revealing. Donahave (in Turley, 2011) stresses, for example, the way in which use of the personal pronoun transforms writing whether creative or critical, by giving visible agency to the author.

Such discussions parallel the debates within post-colonial literatures, as writers make choices whether to write in their first language for their first linguistic community; or to choose a second language in order to make their message meet a more distanced community. Pavlenko

and Lantolf (2000) describe this development as a process of "reorganization" in which learners are "forced to reorganize, and in some cases organize anew, the plots of their

life stories in line with the new set of conventions and social relationships sanctioned by the new community in which they find themselves." (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 219).

Hoffman, in gradually making a transition from Polish as first language to the new, second language, describes how "eventually the voices enter me, by assuming them I gradually make them mine". (Hoffman, 1989, p. 219-220). The new community's language and conventions become not only internalized, but a vehicle for self-expression.

This chapter invites writers developing their practice to contrast the processes of writing for an academic setting and a creative writing audience, and in so doing, it asks how writers adapt to these two different audiences so that, like Hoffman, they make both voices their own?

METHODOLOGY

What? Questions and themes

In establishing congruence between our own roles as researchers and as participants in the research process, we as co-researchers shared our own writing narratives by asking one another how we came to be the writers we are today. From our stories we were able to deduce the following four themes around which our narratives cohered.

Different kinds of writing/writing style/writing purpose/writing audience

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

Writing story/history

• What key events have helped to shape your choices and development as a writer?

Writing – self and other

- How far have others influenced you in your development as a writer? –

Writing and identity

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

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

Who?

The first challenge in the research design was establishing a transparent and workable definition for "poet" and "academic writer". The writers might be able to self-identify as meeting the following criteria:

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

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

. Writers might have had some form of visibility in these public domains, through publication, performance or external readership, including dissertations visible to external examiners and university libraries.,

Invitations were disseminated widely through teaching, writing, research, poetry and professional networks. Between January – July 2014 seventeen writers responded to this invitation and agreed to participate in our pilot project. The seventeen writers, including

ourselves as authors of this paper, represented 9 subject disciplines and a wide range of writing experience in both poetry and academic domains. This is summarized in Table 6.1 below:

Insert Table 6.1 Here: The poet-academic writer backgrounds and experience

The writers could elect to answer our questions either in face to face interview, or in writing by email.

Coding and analyzing the data

In order to arrive at coding categories sensitive to the richness of the data, both researchers interrogated the narratives for significant themes and patterns, and collated these to form a new set of categories. These categories loosely clustered along several continua, from freedom to constraint, pleasure to pain, "insider" editor to "outsider" influence, and from writing as "authentic" to writing as "game-playing". Table 6.2 below maps these continua as a coding tool for analyzing the data.

Insert Table 6.2 Here: Coding categories and continua

In using the continua it became apparent that the same situation was perceived by some of the writers as positive and inspiring, and by others as deskilling and negative. For example, the intervention of external editors, the constraints of formal texttypes, the culture of "publish or perish" in higher education settings, were noted by some of the writers as a spur to writing, but by others as deskilling and negative. Similarly, processes seen by some as self-regulated and internal, were seen by others as controlled and limited by external editors: for example,

making linguistic choices, the shaping of discourse, the shaping of message for a specific audience.These categories were then used for coding the data, numbering each sentence/utterance thematically and identifying its position on the relevant continua, from pleasure to pain, inner to outer editor.

FINDINGS

Identity with the writing process[1]

The writers tended to polarize along two distinct divides: those for whom academic writing was their first writing "place" and who moved later into poetry at a "second writing" stage; and the reverse-those for whom poetry was the starting place and academic writing was (often painfully) later acquired. In describing the transition from one to the other, both groups comment on the conscious and disciplined process of learning another discourse. Keris talks of "painstakingly" learning the forms and expectations of poetry from a poetry "mentor", as she deliberately chose to adopt a poetic voice after many years as an academic social scientist. Patrick describes the unforgiving rigor of poetry peers and his own "inner editor" as he moved from academic history to poetry. The role of mentors, peers, and role models, as well as the rigorous "inner editor" seem to be key characteristics in making this transfer successfully.

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

academic community. Involved in their transition is a strengthening of resolve, determination, even competition, to learn and succeed in the new discourse.

In making this transition from safe to unsafe, familiar to new ground, some of the writers experienced a sense of multiple selves. Simon, a botanist, describes the poet self and the botanist self as "almost a split in personalities". He describes a professional conference where an audience member recognized him as an admired storywriter. The experience was "as if I was meeting my other self". Denise, a social sculptor, has developed names and personalities for the different selves she reveals, and developed them into separate poems. "I am red" is the "feisty defiant self" but the urban indigene is the self that integrates and adapts, and the one who brings together poetry, activism and doctorate level writing. In contrast, however, several writers had no such sense of different selves. Martin writes: "I act differently in the home, in the pub, in a poetry workshop, on a mountain, in front of a lecture audience, but I don't feel I have multiple or conflicting identities". Ashley writes "they're written from different parts of my brain" but does not experience this as a conflict in any way. Whether or not these writing discourses are experienced as different "selves", the writers acknowledge that they express different voices, different aspects of themselves and sometimes different messages. Patrick describes how in his earlier academic history he had referred to himself as "the author". Changes in his positioning both as a historian and as a poet, had enabled him to confront the subjectivity of the writer and bring himself into both kinds of writing.

Sense of audience
The testimonies broadly split between those who felt a strong connection with audience (and expressed a desire to communicate with them) and those who were more concerned with

fulfilling own writing drives than impact on a reader. In their poetic modes, several were inspired and encouraged by the presence of "real" audiences during performance. But the tangible sense of audience was not confined to those who met their audience in public performance. Both Ashley and Colin discuss the need for finding an appropriate and non-condescending tone to address their audience. For example, Ashley writes of a specific "benevolent mentor" stance he adopts in professional writing towards his reader. The writer-audience relationship makes constant demands on his decisions at a discourse level: "this means I have constantly to beware of sounding too pompous, elevated and remote from the reality of my readers."

Many writers saw their own role shifting when they addressed the reader of poetry, rather than the fellow-professional or academic. They describe the expectation of readers to be not only informed or educated, but "helped or inspired by the issues." For some this seemed like an increased responsibility to and awareness of the audience. For others, the experimental nature of the work liberated them from the responsibility to be answerable to others.

Engagement with community

We see from the testimonies in the section above, that a sense of the audience and writer relationship remains significant throughout the writing process. It impacts on language choice and on the freedom or otherwise to play, experiment, and write at the level of symbol. How far are these decisions influenced by encouragement or rejection by others? The writers testify to the fact that the response of the community provides a significant spur to action. Simon explains he "began writing natural history because people (were) encouraging me and also feeling I was capable of doing it". Colin describes the huge impact on his writing when he was commissioned to write a pedagogy of poetry for secondary schools. He explains the

apprenticeship this entailed: "I learnt how to write it by writing it." Others report on the encouragement of supervisors and teachers, the importance of good reviews, the inspiration of publication as a self-perpetuating success, and the response of fellow writers in poetry workshops and readings. All seventeen writers were able to cite by name the first teachers, supervisors, publishers, reviewers, peers who first encouraged them and inspired them to succeed. "It's been enormously important to have the validation and respect, as well as the friendship of my publisher, because he's one of the best readers of poetry that I've met," writes one. "Publication is a wonderful thing" writes another. All the writers report on the significance of reading others they admire: "coming across brilliant work by other writers – this last one is the most important thing by far – whatever I read goes into the writing."

However, persistence in the face of rejection also emerges as a significant factor in these writing histories. Rejections proved to be as significant a spur to action as encouragement. Graham describes the importance of the first negative reviews which "helped me to think this through and articulate what I was doing, to foreground what I was doing that was different." Some writers considered their reviewers to be unsympathetic and alien readers whose feedback was demoralizing and inhibited creative development. These rejections are sometimes experienced not simply as assaults on the writing itself, but confrontations with the writing self and sense of purpose. Jocelyn describes redundancy and rejection as catapulting her into academic writing and the desire to "write back" to her doubters, to prove to them her worth at a more visceral level. Daniel describes the competitive desire to model his writing on those who had failed him academically, and show them he could join and succeed in their "game".

In these testimonies, the notion of the poet honing his craft in solitude is profoundly challenged. The community comes to define and inspire, and it is within these communities that writing milestones are reached. The writers describe the process of consciously absorbing the vocabulary, conceptual frameworks, discourse styles of the community in order to "write back" to it and within it. Their encounters with these communities have profound impact on their sense of worth, as they negotiate rejection and acceptance from these very communities in which they wish to be contributing participants.

Crafting, honing and editing

The writers describe the crafting of both academic and poetic writing as equally conscious and painstaking. Some describe academic writing as "motivated by conscious decisions to communicate instructions, information or opinions". (Martin). They see a clear connection in academic writing between their intention for the writing and structure that develops their intention: "I have a definite intention which gives rise to the structure etc." (Martin). Ashley describes the act of writing a book "gives the work a shape that wasn't there". In several respects, this finding of structure, and giving shape to messages, was perceived as a creative journey into unchartered territory in the same way as writing a poem might be. For example, Simon writes, "Looking back at a book you've written gives you a new perspective on your work sometimes – you see things you haven't seen before." Daniel writes. "I still see it as creative insofar as I don't know where it's going until I get there." Patrick too, explains how, in writing academic history he travelled further than he had anticipated, "giving voice to the people in history who hadn't been there. I saw I could do it this way and it was really something new."

However, the join between message and academic "shape" was painful and alien for those who were "academic immigrants" acquiring this as a second writing style. Denise describes this as the awkwardness of pebbles underfoot; Simon as an adoption of language that seemed to him pretentious and alien. Even Angela, who describes herself as first an academic writer and only later a poet, felt she was writing with more honesty and integrity as a poet than as a university academic. Patrick echoes this sense of academic language as distancing him from himself. He describes his transition from academic to poetic writing, as a "confession that I am in the picture as the writer". He states that "in my first books, I referred to myself as the author" but now, as a poet, he dares to place himself at the center and explore his own history as the starting point for other histories.

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

Academic and poetic messages and the inner editor

Many of the writers felt **what** they said was very different in poetry and in academic writing: and that the contrasting nature of this was fundamental. Denise felt able to write in patois and be a patois speaker/writer in the poetic domain, but was molded into being more conventional in the academic setting. Patrick felt he had made a conscious transition from academic history

to poetry, in order to have permission to tell universal and personal stories. Keris wrote that the issues she had dealt with academically needed to touch "hearts and minds" and reach out in a way that academic writing could not do. In making these choices, these writers consciously shift the center of their message as poets, giving themselves permission to devise their own rules and make their own specific editorial demands. Patrick aims to place his personal story at the heart of poetry, Keris to touch and change her reader, Colin to be original to himself each time he writes: "when I write poems I write out of the unknown into the unknown. My aim as a poet is to write something that's different from everything else I've written." Each writer described the unremitting voice of the inner editor, but what it demands is different as they change role from academic writer to poet.

APPLYING THE DIFFERENCE: CREATIVE AND ACADEMIC WRITING

Our own narrative of the "inner editing" serves to illustrate the challenges and dilemmas mirrored in the testimonies of the writers above. Here we both explore our writing processes in the production of two contrasting texts. The two texts that I (Jane) present below are both exploring aspects of the same question: how are we shaped by our reading, and how does our reading help define our values and practice as teachers? The first extract is an academic response to this question, entailing a study of the testimonies of fifty English as a second language teacher describing their personal reading histories since childhood. The second extract is from a 4-stanza poem, with each stanza describing one of the libraries which made a difference to my own reading life.

Insert Table 6.3 Here: Personal reading histories

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

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

However, what is interesting from the perspective of "inner editor", are the "selves" I felt able to communicate through these different discourses. In the first, academic text, I am

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

The two texts that I (Sue) present are both aspects of the poetry writing process. The first is an extract from a paper which was published in a peer-reviewed academic journal. The paper focused on pre-service English teachers and how the medium of a wiki could develop their professional learning in writing and reading poetry. The second text is a whole poem that was published in my second full collection of poetry. It has been performed at poetry readings and I often use it with student teachers as a starting point for exploring drafting processes.

Insert Table 6.4 Here: Writing Poetry

In the extract from journal article, my co-author and I aim to show that we are aware of what previous researchers "in the field" have written about the role of the teacher as a "model" writer and reader. (This topic has been of particular concern to UK researchers.) Our paper was published in a New Zealand- based international journal *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. My co-author, Janette Hughes, is Canadian. As Jane writes above, in referring to other research we are establishing the credibility of our own research and showing how it has been informed by the work of others within a community to which we aspire to belong.

Moreover, there is an intention to legitimize our choice of approach for an international audience some of whom may not be familiar with the focus on teacher modelling that we have cited.

The compressed nature of the references is a specific academic convention. The Harvard (name: date) referencing follows the bibliographic style explicitly required by the journal publisher. The names and dates are strung together in chronological order on the unspoken understandings that the journal's readers will recognize they represent a body of research over time and that they will know how to interpret/access the texts which are being referred to and follow up on these if they wish. Two succinct quotations from the literature are cited. These further serve to reinforce the validity of the argument being presented regarding the need for teachers to show themselves as writers in front of their students. A date and page number is provided with each direct quotation. The page numbers would aid a reader who wished to follow up the references. In addition, they signal that the paper authors know the texts they have cited and can select from/refer specifically to them.

In contrast my poem 'Inside Notebooks' is a complete text. It contains no explicit references to other texts yet it does, through extensive use of imagery, allude to other events, sightings and experiences that the reader is invited to imagine or recall for themselves. Unlike the academic paper, the reader's experience and response form an integral part of the creation of the poem (Rosenblatt, 1978). At no point is the word "writing" used. The reader is left to his or her own devices to piece together the references to notebooks, words and draft to make that association for themselves if they wish to. The poem is deliberately small in size with words at the ends of lines which are connected with movement and discovery. The language very compressed -- just one sentence -- because I wanted it to somehow reflect the scale of

the brief notes that I make in my notebooks: the brief notes that I dredge up (often years later) and begin to shape into poems. This poem is very much an insider's view on process. I am looking in on my writing act and try to capture aspects of it in a way that might invite others in. In contrast, the academic paper looks out to what others have written and aims to establish our paper's place as part of that community's research dialogue.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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

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

The writers reveal to us the importance of the writing community in honing and defining their practice. Whether they perceived writing as freedom and empowerment or as a form of "game" with alien rules, both entailed validation by a community. Whilst many were spurred by rejection and setbacks, none who still identified themselves as writers dwelt on this stage of their learning. They had moved beyond this, were writing back in some way to the community that had rejected them. Conversely, all were able to cite examples of inspiration and encouragement from those who read and wrote as peers, critics and editors. Thus, in being a writer, achievement is not "easy": the inner editor is alert at multiple points in the writing journey. Writers had high standards for themselves in both academic and poetic modes, and rarely described completion that had not been tirelessly earned. In most cases,

completion was measured by the inner editor as satisfactory to their personal aims; but this was only finally acceptable to most of the writers if it was validated too by the external world – through publication, audience and positive review.

What aspects of themselves are revealed, or concealed, as they move between these audiences?

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

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

What parallels are there between these writing transitions and those of second language writers?

Joining and becoming accepted by a community, whether scholarly, creative or professional, emerges as a hidden dimension of the writing process. This parallels the second language learner's process as they negotiate a second language culture. Becoming an "ethnographer" of that culture by observing its social and linguistic conventions, and mirroring those which are needed for acceptance, are part of the language learners' repertoire of strategies (see, for example, Valdes, 2001; Corbett, 2003). While this may take place in "real time" during social discourse, the writer has the relative leisure to make conscious choices, and to edit and revisit these. As we ask writers how they make conscious choices from one audience to another, we see them also learning what is acceptable, observing and mirroring conventions, experimenting with the boundaries, discovering where there is scope for experimentation and rule-breaking.

How might these findings inform the teaching and learning of second language writing?

The writer testimonies reveal the importance of learning with and from others in order to join a chosen community of readers: thus peer reviewing, reading appreciatively as a prelude to writing, publication for others, are all a part of writing development. It is thus important as learner writers, to be readers and reviewers as well, and develop the skills of constructive editing of one another. Making ground rules explicit for constructive peer support of writing is a significant part of the process. These might include: peers reading for the author's meaning and intention rather than imposing their own: and peers aiming together for the best possible outcome that can also be owned fully by the writer.

To balance these roles within a writing community, the learner writer also needs to develop the "inner editor", setting personal criteria for success.

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

As academics many of the writers felt it necessary to conceal their own agency as author, but were able to place this at the center of their writing as poets. In order to bring themselves into scholarly writing, many described an actual paradigm shift, a new approach to knowledge as they insisted on occupying the stage as authors of their own research. Is my goal to be the same or to be different to other writers? Many of the writers felt more freedom to break rules, experiment and write to their own agendas as poets than as academics. Whilst many described the scope for creativity within an academic writing context, most also emphasized the constraints and the penalties of transgressing these rules. As academic writers they needed to mirror what others do, even to the extent of echoing the same phrases and vocabulary; as poets they felt empowered to write "into the unknown".

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

As poets many described their enjoyment of metaphor, opening up zones of ambiguity. Many identified, in contrast, the importance of clarity and unambiguity, benevolent mentor and didactic roles, in their writing academically.

Whilst these testimonies suggest a demarcation between invisible author/conventional language/literal meanings in academic writing: versus visible author/experimental language/symbolic meanings in poetry, this distinction is not always so clear-cut. Writers describe the possibilities of crossing boundaries between these two and challenging expectation.

As with the language learning process, negotiation is never complete, and resistance to setbacks and failure is as much part of development as success itself Czeslaw Milosz talks of the disconnect with his mother tongue in his poem "My Faithful Mother Tongue" (2002, p. 336):

> without you, who am I?
>
> Only a scholar in a distant country.

It is interesting to note that for Milosz, scholarship is a more distant country than poetry. Our writers have here questioned this division, and invited us to make ourselves more open as researchers, and as first and second language writers, to learn from the processes of both. We can interpret these processes as a repertoire of competences that parallel the competence of travelers traversing cultures and communities making them their own.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

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

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

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

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

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

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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

2. How far does the practice of experimental/creative/personal writing help fluency in more formal writing contexts? How do learner writers transfer skills and strategies from one writing context to the other?

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

NOTES

[1] Please note the names in this section have been fictionalized to maintain confidentiality.

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