

Creative Writing as Part and Parcel of Developing Communicative & Intellectual FL Learners' Powers

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Abstract

For many years in ELT methodology the questions of teaching writing in ELT coursebooks have been given much attention in terms of its nature, differences between written and spoken speech, ELT objectives and approaches to teaching writing, types of writing genres, writing assessment. But one rather neglected area in that regard is a graded teaching of creative writing to FL learners. The fifteen-year experience with organizing language-and-culture competitions launched by the Research Centre "EuroschooL" for foreign language /FL/ students across Russia have proved that even intermediate FL learners, not to speak about advanced students are quite capable of writing in a FL: a) poems and songs expressing their ideas about teenagers' lifestyle & visions of contemporary world; b) short stories describing family and school life experiences of their own or their peers; c) essays based on their comparative study of native and foreign cultures; d) presentations of Russian culture & other cultures of the Russian Federation in an English environment while being on exchange visits; e) translations of English poetry, short stories, excerpts from humours books, stripes of comics. The paper compares teaching creative writing in Russian and English, discusses the questions arisen from the outcomes of the language-and-culture competitions, arguing that effective teaching of creative writing presupposes: 1) teaching a FL in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations, 2) introducing creative writing into a FL curriculum, 3) designing a package of thought-provoking teaching materials aiming at developing communicative, intellectual & mediating learners' powers, 4) applying appropriate assessment scales for observing the dynamics of learners' development as creative writers, 5) marrying students' bilingual and cross-cultural/pluricultural classroom activities stimulating their participation in language-and-culture competitions.

Keywords: teaching creative writing, FLT, FLL, language-and culture competitions, FLT hierarchy of creative writing types, monolingual and bilingual creative writing, cross-cultural creative tasks

1. Introduction.

Teaching writing is a key issue in any book on language methodology no matter if the mother tongue or a second language or a foreign language is taught to students, though quite different methodologies are sometimes applied in each case. It is a well-known fact that for many years writing in a FL has been mostly taught as a means of *everyday* communication (Nunan, 1991; Ur, 1991; Hedge, 2002; Richards, 2002, 2015; Scrivener, 2011), and only for the last fifteen years has there been a noticeable and absolutely necessary ELT step forward to teaching business and academic writing. Meanwhile, we do understand that writing is a multifarious culture-bound human activity which has been for centuries used as a means of self-education, self-cognition and self-expression, an instrument of recording history in all its controversy, a valuable tool of creating great national literature, not to speak about the contribution of this language activity to creating & preserving cultural heritage. Thus, on one hand, human beings desperately require to have good writing skill in order to satisfy their pragmatic communicative and cognitive needs, but, on the other hand, human civilisation in all times could hardly have

been made any significant progress if there had not been those people who could produce creative writings. Creativity has become a buzz word in language pedagogy, especially in those its works that give an insight into co-learning languages & cultures (Maley, 2012; Maley, Peachey, 2012, 2015, Safonova, 2000). But there are still a number of very important questions in this ELT field that need a careful consideration, for instance, such as:

- What is exactly meant by teaching creative writing in a foreign language classroom?
- Could we clearly see to what extent creative writing methodology is developed in FLT and FLL and what is still terra incognita in this field?
- Is it possible to build up a certain hierarchy of creative writing activities and products that would help us introduce this or that creative activity at the proper place in a system of teaching and assessing writing skills?
- It is these questions that are discussed in the present paper.

2. Literature Review

Vygotsky's works on the cultural development of the child (Vygotsky, 2004), imagination and creativity during children's schooling (Vygotsky, 1991a), pedagogical psychology (Vygotsky, 1991b) have had a significant influence on the development of creative pedagogy not only in Russia, but nearly everywhere in the world. These works were written at the dawn of the 20th century, in the 1930s, however it was not earlier than the 1970s that the most significant postulates underlying Vygotsky's theory of creativity were thoroughly and purposefully studied as a theoretical basis for developing problem-based learning of different school subjects in Russia (Machmutov, 1975; Aleinikov, 1989) and later on for developing methodology of creative pedagogy (Tudor, 2008) as a sub-field of pedagogy and didactics in other countries. Among Vygotsky's postulates of special value for developing students' creative minds and skills are such as: a) Vygotsky's concept of creativity (Vygotsky, 1991a, p. 4); b) his vision of creativity as a process and as a product (Vygotsky, 1991a); c) the introduction of the concept of *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1934, p. 217) and his suggestions on educational strategies (Vygotsky, 1991b).

According to Vygotsky, a creative activity is such person's activity that produces something new or novel, no matter if the outcome of this activity will be something of the external world or a construction of mind or feeling. It lives and reveals itself only in the person himself, in his mind (Vygotsky, 1991a, pp. 4-5). More than that, in "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" Vygotsky emphasizes that a common perception of creativity does not fully correspond to the scientific understanding of this word. In public perception, he admits, a few chosen people, geniuses, and talents are destined to create great works of art, make great scientific discoveries, or bring any improvements in the field of technology. He goes on saying that we readily and easily recognize creativity in the work of Tolstoy, Edison and Darwin, but it usually seems to us that in the life of an ordinary man this creativity does not exist at all (Vygotsky, 1991a, pp. 5-6). However, Vygotsky criticizes this point of view, arguing that creativity actually exists not only in cases when great historical works are created, but also in every case whenever a person imagines, combines, changes, and creates something new, no matter how much it has seemed new in comparison with the creations of geniuses. A huge part of everything created by mankind belongs precisely to the unnamed creative work of unknown inventors (Vygotsky, 1991a, p. 6).

And thus, from Vygotsky point of view, scientific understanding of creativity as a human activity makes us, therefore, look at it as a rule rather than as an exception. Of course, the highest expressions of creativity are still outcomes of a few selected geniuses of mankind, but in everyday life around us everything that goes beyond the limits of routine and where there is at least one iota of the new, owes its origin to the creative powers of man (Vygotsky, 1991a, pp. 6-7). These ideas expressed by Vygotsky at the beginning of the 20th century echo with what has been written by Maley in "Creativity in the English Language Classroom" in which it is clearly stated that that everyone has the capacity to exercise creativity and that it is not the preserve of a privileged elite. While not everyone will have the big 'C' creative genius of an Einstein, a Picasso, a Mozart or a Dostoevsky, everyone can exercise what some have called little 'c' creativity, which is inherent in language itself across all age ranges and all levels (Maley, 2015, p. 6).

While analyzing creativity as a process, Vygotsky gives special attention to the questions of:

- highlighting essential characteristics of creativity as a culturally and historically bound phenomenon of a human development in which language and culture are always interrelated, communicative (including interactive) and cognitive activities are interdependent & interlinked; from Vygotsky's point of view, every inventor, even a genius, is always a product of his own time and environment. His creativity comes from those needs and

backgrounds that have been identified before, and it is based on those possibilities that again do exist outside of him. So, creativity is a historically successive process, where each subsequent form is determined by the preceding ones. (Vygotsky, 1991a, p. 23);

- giving a psychological description of human imagination as a tool of creating new imaginative reality, though based on the individual's pre-learned human practices & experiences, individual imaginative powers in a particular cultural environment (Vygotsky, 1991a);
- exploring the possibilities of splitting imagination process into a number of stages (Vygotsky, 1991a).

According to Vygotsky the latter involves such stages as: a) *man's external and internal perception* and *accumulation* stage (the man's accumulation of the material upon which his or her future imaginative product will be built); b) *dissociation* stage (the man's splitting the complex whole into parts, some of these parts are focused on while others are neglected for creative purposes); c) *novel transformation* of the earlier disintegrated parts into something new and original (Vygotsky, 1991a, pp. 20-25). In other words, creativity products or, to put it more precisely, products of human imagination, go through certain stages in their development: first, the elements taken from reality are subjected to complex processing and become products of the individual's or collective imagination, and after imaginative ideas are embodied in them, they come back to human reality as cultural products and a new active cultural force changing this reality (Vygotsky, 1991a, p. 16).

The concept of the zone of proximal development /ZPD/ is a theoretical construct introduced by Vygotsky in 1932-1934 to characterize the relationship between learning and the child's mental development (Vygotsky, 1934, pp. 217-219). He proved theoretically and experimentally that the ZPD is characterised by the type and content of those tasks that a child can not yet do on his own, but he is able to do them in cooperation with an adult. And what can be done by a child at first only under the guidance of adults, then, step-by-step, it becomes his own intellectual property and power (Vygotsky, 1934, p. 220). The introduction of Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development /ZPD/ was absolutely crucial for understanding the nature of children's mental development and its close interrelationships with methods of learning, teaching, forms of formal and informal education and upbringing. Vygotsky's ideas about the ZPD had and still has a profound impact on pedagogy in general and FLT in particular including teaching writing (Emerson, 1991).

Where are we now in teaching creative writing? The analysis of studies undertaken in ELT provide us with:

- a number of working definitions of creative writing as a FLT term (e.g. Neupane, 2015; Harmer, 2015; Karki, 2015);
- essential characteristics of creative writing in contrast with expository writing that have been identified by Maley (2012);
- some principles of teaching creative writing to FL students (Maley, 2015; Riocards, 2013);
- descriptions of creative language teachers' qualities, experimental data on applying creativity in teaching languages and how this creativity can be supported in the school (Richards, 2013);
- experimental project results on the ways of developing students' and teachers' awareness of themselves as writers capable to produce creative writing (Asian English Language Teachers' Creative Writing Project, 2015)
- a variety of practical techniques and procedures for teachers to use when teaching creative writing (Richards, 2013; Asian English Language Teachers' Creative Writing Project, 2015);
- a description of creative writing types as outcomes of school students' language-and-culture competitions (Creativity Rainbow 2001, 2008a, 2008b).

Hammer defines creative writing in terms of task types, saying that "creative writing suggest imaginative tasks, such as writing poetry, stories and plays" (Harmer, 2015, p. 366). But this definition seems to be somewhat narrow and incomplete. Let's have a look at the following writing done by a Russian Students in English:

The Earth's Declaration of Her Rights to the People

by Svetlana Ivankina

*I, the planet Earth, the Cradle of Mankind,
convinced that it is your duty to stop my destruction and save me,
concerned that your activities undermine my ecological health,
alarmed that my body is being torn by your explosions, pits and mines,*

equally alarmed that my rivers, lakes and oceans are being poisoned and the air is being polluted by cars, industrial facilities and forest fires,

convinced that our mutual love save Me and You! (Creativity Rainbow, 2001, p.18)

This writing has nothing to do with either writing poetry or stories or the like. Still, it is a piece of creative writing in a FL, because the student has produced a sample of imaginative writing by using creatively the EL form of declaration and transforming it into an imaginary declaration in order to express her ecological concerns and feelings through an imaginary appeal of the Earth as a living being to the feelings of human beings. And though this piece of writing has certainly been based on some students' knowledge of ecological facts, but this text aims not at simple informing others of ecological problems, but at expressing the author's concerns and emotions in the most possible attractive and convincing way. And it is no less expressive than the poem below written also by a Russian FL student (Creativity Rainbow, 2001, p.10).

WHO AM I?

By Olga Zhabina

On a dark October evening

When the wind and leaves cry

I always think, where I have been?

And especially who am I?

On a sunny January morning

When the streets and trees are white

I always think, where I am going?

And especially who am I?

In Spring, when April comes

I always think, what I will become?

And especially who am I?

On a shiny summer day

When everything is fun

I always think, why I am like I am?

And especially who am I?

When my pen is out of ink

And I'm ending my rhyme

I try to understand why I always think?

And especially who am I?

So, it seems that creative writing should not be limited only to writing imaginative poems and stories. But then what writings in English as a FL can be identified as creative?

3. Discussion.

3.1 Monolingual and Bilingual Creative Writing.

In the middle of the 1990s a package of new EL teaching and learning materials was approved by the RF Ministry of Education for introducing it in upper secondary languages schools (grade 10 to 11). This package of new teaching and learning materials was specifically designed for teaching English in languages schools whose curriculum differed much from curriculums of other types of schooling in Russia at that time, because in these schools pupils started learning English or any other foreign language in primary school (while in other types of Russian schools they started learning a foreign language in the middle school in the 1990s¹), they did more hours of language learning in comparison with students from other types of school, besides additional subjects were included in the languages school curriculum such as British/American Country Studies, British/American Literature, British/American History and Technical Translation from English into Russian. With the exception of a course in Technical Translation, courses in the other subjects mentioned above were taught through the medium of English.

The new package of EL teaching and learning materials was developed in the context of sociocultural problem-based approach to teaching international languages aiming at: a) teaching English as a means of intercultural communication in the contexts of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations, b) supporting bilingual education through a FL, c) developing students' intellectual, communicative and mediating powers as intercultural speakers and writers (Safonova, 1991, 1996). The teaching and learning package under consideration included an interculturally oriented course-book, a companion to written English, a Cultural Studies course-book and Assessment tasks Kit for developing and assessing students' integrated skills in listening, reading, writing and speaking in English, and, also cultural/cross-cultural skills in interpreting cultural terms, facts, events, lifestyles, national historic landmarks and cultural heritage of the English-Speaking and Russian-Speaking countries, their societies and communities on comparative interdisciplinary basis. In 2000 the

¹ Nowadays every child in Russian Federation has to learn a modern foreign language in primary school no matter what type of school s/he attends.

Research Centre «Euroschool» launched the first culture-and language competition mostly for upper-secondary students from languages schools across Russia, but that did not mean that students from other types of Russian schools could not take part in that competition, though it was quite obvious that it would be more difficult for the latter to do culture-bound and thought-provoking competition tasks than for languages schools students. The participants of the first culture-and-language competition (500 EL students across Russia) were to choose one of the following writing genres for demonstrating their creative talents in English:

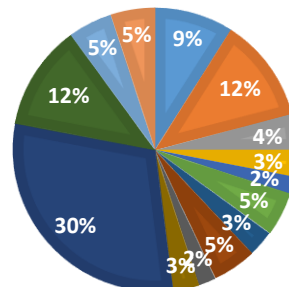
- culture & society essays (comparing Russian and British cultural events, values, cultural heritage and the like);
- discursive essays on global or local issues (e.g. Life in the 21st century who can cope with it?);
- “poeticized” imaginative declarations;
- short stories based on teenagers’ vision of the world;
- modern fairytales;
- poetic pieces that express students’ personal feelings and emotions.

There was one more competition category besides the listed above: the so-called “open task” when participants had the right not to choose any of the tasks listed above, but to submit to the competition jury one of their written works (not more than 1500 words) that in their opinion belonged to creative writing. And it is interesting to note that under the last category many of the participants decided to submit their translations of English poetry (including modern poetry), legends, humour essays, essays on British cultural heritage that were once read and discussed by them. The members of the competition jury included university and school teachers involved in teaching the English language, History, Literature and Journalism, different types of translation. The members of the competition jury that evaluated participants’ creative works in English were given a number of rating scales based, on one hand, on a general set of literary criteria (e.g. aesthetic value, social value, originality/novelty of ideas & thought, expressiveness and emotiveness, participants’ writing culture) and, on the other hand, on a set of some specific criteria applied when a particular genre of creative writing is being evaluated. As for the translation competition, a translation checklist was used for making judgements on participants’ translation products. The diagram on the following page illustrates the 2000 competition participants’ preferences in choosing a particular type of creative writing in English for its submission to the competition jury.

First, the diagram shows that the participants’ preferences in choosing a particular form of creative writing in English for its submission to the jury came from their schooling experiences in producing different kinds of creative writing (writing cultural and discursive essays are their top choices). Second, it indicates that Russian students’ were very keen on doing literary translations (especially poetry), despite the fact that the school curriculum included only Technical Translation as a subject, at some languages schools students were offered selective courses in different types of literary translation. The winners’ works were in all categories of the creative writing genres listed above and later on they were published in the youth almanac “Creativity Rainbow” (2001). Third, this language-and culture competitions appeared to have been flexible enough to let students with different language talents and creative capacities participate in it. And, finally, these results were also very suggestive of what could be understood as creative writing at least in Russia, because it can be an umbrella term for including not only monolingual imaginative writings, but bilingual creative writing products (culture-bound media or literary translations) as well.

TYPES OF CREATIVE WRITING (CW IN ENGLISH) AND TRANSLATIONS (T)

- Culture & society essays (CW IN ENGLISH)
- Discursive essays (CW IN ENGLISH)
- Imaginative declarations/petitions (CW IN ENGLISH)
- Stories (CW IN ENGLISH)
- Modern fairytales (CW IN ENGLISH)
- Lyric poetry (CW IN ENGLISH)
- English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Legends (T)
- Excerpts from the 20th century English Literature (T)
- Literary essays (T)
- Humorous essays (T)
- Classical English poetry (T)
- Modern British poetry (T)
- Religious poetry (T)
- Russian Lyric and Poetry (T)



Among monolingual creative writings there could be identified three groups: a) monolingual and monocultural creative writings, b) monolingual and cross-cultural creative writings, and c) monolingual and even pluricultural creative writings. All these considerations seem to be worth bearing in mind when we are in search of how to conceptualize the notion of creative writing for ELT purposes and to provide a methodological classification of different types of creative writing in accordance with students' interests, their command of language and values of a particular educational interdisciplinary environment. The 2000 language-and-culture competition results also signaled to the developers of language curricula and syllabuses, as well as to the authors of teaching and learning materials for middle and secondary schools that creative writing syllabuses and appropriate teaching & learning materials with creative input¹ were to be specifically designed for different stages of school education (primary, low- and upper-secondary school).

In 2001 the Research Centre "Euroschoo" developed a package of new problem-based and task-based ELT & ELL materials for low-secondary school students developed again in the context of sociocultural approach to teaching English as a means of intercultural communication (with native and non-native speakers of English) than consisted of a pluricultural English course-book (with European & wider world dimensions), a reading and listening companion containing materials for: a) organizing students' drama-based activities (reading, listening to/ watching English plays & films), helping students to stage some parts of the plays being studied and developing students' performing skills; b) teaching students to read, interpret and enjoy poetry in English and then to write their own pieces of modern poetry in English (e.g. limericks, haiku, lyric poems); c) making students aware of the world cultural heritage relating to leisure time activities and developing students' skills in entertaining guests whenever they organize their parties in Russian or English or in both languages at school or at home or at youth clubs; d) enriching their cultural knowledge on world cultures (including the cultures of the English speaking world) and developing their interpreting and mediating skills; e) letting them become acquainted with the best Russian translators of fiction and poetry from English into Russian and developing their skills in comparing and making judgements on the aesthetic, literary and human values of translated literary works from English into Russian (included in the teaching materials).

¹ See, for example, Safonova, V., Tverdokhlebova I., Solovova, E. (2001). New Challenges in Reading. Moscow: Prosveschenie; Safonova, V., Polyakov, O., Strokova, S. (2003) New Challenges in Reading and Listening. Moscow: Prosveschenie; Safonova V. (2004) Cross-Cultural Code: Practice in Writing and Public Speaking. Moscow: Euroschoo; Safonova, V. (2004). English for Intercultural Communication & Critical thinking. Moscow: Euroschoo; Safonova, V. (2004). Introduction into Translation and Interpretation.

After the four-year piloting of the materials under considerations in different Russian educational environments (urban or rural low-secondary schools), the Research Centre "Euroschoo" launched the 2004 and 2008 language-and-culture competitions not only for upper-secondary students (grades 10-11), but for low-secondary students (only grades 8&9) as well (the number of the participants that took part in them significantly increased from 500 in 2000 to 1500 in 2004 and to 3000 in 2008). The variety of competition tasks that were offered to upper-secondary participants were nearly the same as in 2000, but what was agreed on to add to the competitive tasks in 2004 and 2008 were translation tasks (students' translations of newspaper materials or pieces of prose and poetry). The competitive tasks for low-secondary school participants included such types of creative writing as: a) discursive essays on some themes often discussed in the classroom (like "Good teachers change their students' lives and good students change their teachers' lives", "Linguistic and cultural diversity, is it a barrier to communication or a source of mutual enrichment and understanding?", "Can we live without today's world of fashion or can this world of fashion live without us?"; b) sightseeing mini-guides to the places where students live (for foreign visitors who would like to come to Russia); c) translations of poetry and prose pieces that they came across while using their language education package. The analysis of the 2004 & 2008 competitions materials clearly showed that the part of creative writing in English had been dramatically increased to 52% of all participants' creative writings submitted to the competition jury in 2004 and to 64% in 2008, whereas the number of translation works submitted to these competitions became less: 48% of all participants' works were submitted to the 2004 competition and 46% were submitted to the 2008 competition. In their interviews Russian students said that they still enjoyed very much translating prose and poetry, culture-bound media texts from English into Russian, and even translating poems from Russian into English in their free time, but they started looking more critically at their translation efforts after they had attended some elective courses in translation at their schools which made them think more carefully about what to submit to language-and-culture competitions in order to win these competitions. They also thought that they started feeling more confident about creative writing, because at school they did different types of creative writing in English on a regular basis and they were also taught how to self-assess their writing achievements. In other words, it is both culture-bound monolingual activities and bilingual activities that were again identified by Russian students as creative and enjoyable language practices and experiences.

3.2. The CEFR Views on Assessing Creative Writing Skills.

As has been said before, there is not an apparent consensus in ELT about neither the concept of creativity nor of the notion of creative writing. Nevertheless, there is a common feeling in ELT communities that contemporary language education badly needs creative input, because creativity is really and equally important both in life and in teaching and learning languages (Maley, Pearcy, 2015, p.6). Perhaps, that is one of the reasons that the CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors (2017) has introduced for the first time a six-level illustrative scale for measuring creative writing skills¹ (Council of Europe, 2017), no such scale was in the 2001 CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and that is certainly a step forward in developing creative pedagogy of writing in FLT & FLL. The CEFR Companion argues that creative writing involves personal, imaginative expression in a variety of text types. But what types of writing are included in the CEFR Companion scale for measuring creative skills in a FL?

Table 1 below illustrates these types of writing beginning with the lowest CEFR level and ending with its highest.

Table 1. CEFR text types/genres indicated in the illustrative scale for measuring creative writing skills.

| CEFR level | Text types/genres |
|------------|---|
| A1 | descriptions of simple objects many interrelated objects in a particular place simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people |
| A2 | an introduction to a story, continuation of a story diary entries imaginary biographies & simple poems about people a series of simple phrases about family, living conditions, educational background, present or recent job basic description of events, past activities and personal experiences |
| B1 | story |

¹ Earlier this scale and some other new CEFR scales were piloted in about 60 countries located in Europe and on other continents.

| | |
|----|---|
| | description of real or imagined events accounts of experiences, describing feelings and emotions in a simple connected text straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects simple review a review of the book, film or play |
| B2 | clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events or experiences clear, detailed description on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest |
| C1 | a detailed critical review of cultural events (e.g. plays, films, concerts) or literary works clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind |
| C2 | clear, smoothly flowing and engaging stories and descriptions |

As is seen from the table, the scale above demonstrates rather a controversial approach to the choice of writing types. Some of them are well-known writing genres either in fiction (descriptions, poems, stories, diaries), or in non-fiction (accounts of experiences, biography, reviews). The fiction genres do belong to imaginative writing, non-fiction does not belong to imaginative writing in the traditional meaning of the word, but they may be impressive and expressive enough if critical thinking and expressive rhetorics are involved in these writing, but what about "simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people" at level A1 (Council of Europe, 2017, p.75) or "a series of simple phrases about family, living conditions, educational background, present or recent job" (Council of Europe, 2017, p.75) at A2? I am afraid these descriptors of the scale under consideration are somewhat irrelevant, because simple phrases and sentences and even a series of them can hardly be a real means of learners' imaginative expression. It seems to me that we should start thinking about measuring creative skills only when learners' command of language has already reached level A2 and consider the types of writing belonging, on one hand, to traditional imaginative writings (e.g. writing poems, stories, riddles etc.) and, on the other hand, to non-fiction writings involving critical thinking and language expressiveness (like reviews, biographies, critical/reflective essays about literature). The CEFR Companion has excluded essay writing from the category of creative writings and it has suggested a separate scale for measuring skills in writing reports and essays. But if writing a report is obviously nothing else as expository writing, with essay writing it is a bit another story, because essays as a writing genre include not only expository essays, but literary and/or reflective essays that may involve creativity in terms of approaches to exploring a particular literary theme, emotional colouring in the interpretation of prose or poetry and the rhetoric language means used by the writer to express his/ her thoughts, ideas, emotions and feelings. Not to speak about other methodological limitations of the CEFR Companion, it seems worth to say that the controversy of the CEFR Companion to its approach of measuring creative writings skills lies in the lack of ELT specialists' consensus on what creative writing is and what creative writing types should be introduced into ELT at particular stage or cycle of FL education. And for these purposes what is urgently needed is a didactically oriented classification of creative writing types in accordance with modern learners' interests, their real cognitive and language capacities to be involved into creating writing in a FL, ICT possibilities for them to be educated and self-educated in creative writing, and Vygotsky's postulates about the zone of proximal development.

3.3. Establishing a Graded Hierarchy of Creative Writings for FLT & FLL Purposes

Before starting describing a possible hierarchy of creative writing tasks as methodological tools for developing students creativity abilities through the medium of a FL, we would need to come back to the question of providing a didactically oriented classification of creating writings that would include fiction and non-fiction types. As for fiction writings, an endless number of fiction classifications are based on the analysis of human experiences in creating literature in a mother tongue in which core literary genres (e.g., legends, sagas, folklore tales, fairy tales, short stories, novels, plays, poems, anecdotes, riddles) and subgenres within each of the genres (e.g. animal stories, detective stories, horror stories, humorous stories, graphic short stories) have been listed century after century. With the view to FLT purposes, specific characteristics of a FL as a subject, and FL educational environments, it is obvious that it is mostly such writing genres as fairy tales, short stories, small plays, poems and riddles that can be introduced into a creative writing syllabus in a FL and may be taught in the FL classroom, selecting those subgenres of this or that genre that seem appropriate to the interests of the learner, his/her capacities within the zone of proximal development and in terms of their intellectual and communicative (language)

characteristics as a writer and intercultural characteristics as a mediator (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2017). The recent experimental studies of the Research Centre “Euroschoo” on finding a possible correlation of teaching and assessing the learner’s literary writings and to the CEFR levels of the learner’s communicative language competence are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Possible correlations of literary writings to the learner’s CEFR level.

| LITERARY GENRES | LITERARY SUBGENRES | CEFR LEVELS |
|-----------------|--|-------------|
| Riddles | Riddles based on vocabulary definitions. | A2 |
| | Riddles based on what has been read/listen to/watched. | A2-B1 |
| | Cultural riddles belonging to the cultural leisure heritage of the target country (e.g. British “Who knocks at the door”. | B2- C1 |
| | Riddles translated from the mother tongue into the target language. | C1-C2 |
| Prose | Narratives for picture books (familiar to the learner). | A1 |
| | Narratives for picture books (unfamiliar to the learner, but s/he can find necessary information about the characters and their actions on the Web). | A2 |
| | Literary descriptions of people, places, events and things in an imaginative way. | A2 |
| | Literary imaginative transformations of something that has been read/listened to/watched into a new writing product in an imaginative way. | B1 |
| | Diaries. | B1 |
| | Letters to imaginary characters or characters from fiction, films and videos. | B1 |
| | Narrative for cartoons. | B2 |
| | Graphic short story to the visual clues provided. | B2 |
| | Fairy tales. | B2-C1 |
| | Short stories on everyday life topics. | B2 |
| | Plays based on what they have read and discussed. | B2 |
| | Sci-fi stories. | C1-C2 |
| | Mysteries detective story. | C2 |
| | Prose translations form the target language into a mother tongue. | C1-C2 |
| | Poetry | A1 |
| | Vocabulary transformations of chants known to the FL learner. | A1 |
| Poetry | Chants writing. | A1-A2 |
| | Rap. | A2-B1 |
| | Acrostic poems. | B1-B2 |
| | Limericks. | B2 |
| | Haiku. | B2- C1 |
| | Lyric poems. | B2-C1 |
| | Poetry translation. | B2-C2 |

Table 3 reflects the findings of the Research Centre “Euroschoo” about a possible correlation of the non-fiction writings to the learner’s CEFR level of communicative language competence.

Table 3 Possible correlations of the non-fiction types of creative writing to the learner’s CEFR level of communicative language competence.

| GENRES | SUBGENRES | CEFR LEVELS |
|--------|--|-------------|
| Essays | Reflective essays on what the learner feels about a poem/a story. | A2 |
| | Reflective essays on twitter messages. | A2 |
| | Reflective essay on what the learner feels about a novel/film/YouTube videos. | B1 |
| | Discursive essays on contemporary themes. | B2 |
| | Cultural comments on the target country media or literary products. | B2-C1 |
| | Culture essays (on some cultural aspects of people’s life, lifestyle and life values in the target country/countries). | B2-C1 |
| | Comparative cross-cultural essays. | C1 |
| | Comparative pluricultural essays. | C2 |
| | Translation of the culture-bound essays written by representative of the target country/countries. | C1-C2 |
| | Translation of the culture-bound essays written by native and non-native speakers of | C2 |

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| | English. | |
| Reviews | Reviews of foreign films, videos, books produced in the target countries. | B2 |
| | Reviews of films or YouTube videos relating to different countries on one and the same topic. | B2 |
| | Reviews of foreign films or YouTube videos in his/her mother tongue for local audiences | C1 |
| | Reviews of mother tongue films or YouTube videos in a FL for foreign audiences. | C2 |
| PowerPoint presentation (written aspects) | FL presentation posters on cultural aspects of everyday life in the learner's native country. | A2 |
| | FL presentation posters on traditions and beliefs traditional shared by the people of the learner's native country. | B1-B2 |
| | Business presentations. | B2 |
| | Academic presentations. | C1 |
| | Cross-cultural presentations in a FL for foreign audiences. | C1 |
| | Cross-cultural presentations in the mother tongue (for the local audiences). | C1-C2 |

The integration of bilingual cross-cultural or pluricultural writing activities into learners' language practices helps students become as cultural, then cross-cultural and even pluricultural mediators (Safonova, 2017).

The establishment of a hierarchy of monolingual and bilingual types of creative writing is a starting point for developing a methodology of teaching creative writing at different school stages or university cycles of cross-cultural or pluricultural language education. Among the objectives of cross-cultural/pluricultural education through a foreign language the priorities should be given to teachers' strategies aiming at: 1) teaching a FL in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations (Safonova, 1991, 1996, 2001) and with the view to the learners' zone of approximal development, 2) introducing creative writing into a culture-bound FL curriculum, 3) designing a package of thought-provoking teaching and learning materials aiming at developing communicative, intellectual & mediating learners' powers, 4) applying appropriate assessment scales for observing the dynamics of learners' development as creative writers, 5) marrying students' bilingual and bicultural classroom activities with their participation in language-and-culture competitions. The process of developing creative skills involves three stages:

The pre-creative writing stage aims at developing students' general cognitive and communicative skills which are basic for starting to teach them how to write a particular genre of creative writing, making them aware of the language format and rhetoric characteristics of a writing genre to be taught, identifying and exploring cultural themes related to everyday or academic or business communication that may be interesting for creative writing;

The creative writing stage aims at teaching students how to use their knowledge on the format and rhetoric features of a particular writing genre in their written practices, how to edit and self-assess their efforts and achievements in creating writings;

The post-creative writing stage focuses on organizing events (competitions, language clubs, school parties) at which students can demonstrate their samples of creative writings and be appreciated by their peers, school teachers and/or local/foreign communities.

Conclusions.

In contemporary FLT and FLL there is no need to argue about if creative writing should be included in FL curriculum or at least FL syllabuses and become part and parcel of developing communicative & intellectual FL Learners' powers. But a consensus should be achieved among FL specialists about the most appropriate types of creative writings that can be effectively introduced at different stages or cycles of cross-cultural or pluricultural language education. The hierarchy of monolingual and bilingual cross-cultural/pluricultural creative activities involving students' production of fiction and non-fiction types of creative writing provides the ground for further discussions of multi-level teaching and assessing creative writing in a foreign language. A graded classification of creative writing types can serve as a methodological framework for creating and providing Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in and outside the English classroom. Besides it also provides no less important ground for reconsidering the content of teacher training courses dealing with teaching writing.

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