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L2 POETRY WRITING IN THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

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Kharkiv City Council

Information about the Author:

Tetyana Varenko: ORCID: 0000-0001-8090-3231; varenko_t@city.kharkov.ua; PhD in Education, Associate Professor; Head of Monitoring and Information Analysis Support, Department for Cooperation with International Agencies and Financial Institutions, Kharkiv City Council; 7 Konstytutsii Square, Kharkiv, 61200, Ukraine

The ability to write poetry in a particular language requires and is indicative of the highest level of the language proficiency. This idea brought about a hypothesis that L2 poetry writing could be a valuable tool in training specialists whose professions directly relate to excellent foreign language skills (translators and interpreters, L2 teachers and instructors). Hence, the objectives of this paper are to determine students' acceptance of and demand for L2 poetry writing as a teaching method and to confirm the above hypothesis that this foreign language teaching and learning methodology can be used as a powerful tool to improve the overall foreign language command, strengthen students' confidence in themselves in general and their linguistic abilities in particular, enhance their L2 fluency, and boost their motivation for better performance in their studies.

The paper reviews and analyses seven different L2 poetry writing activities (illustrative examples provided) practiced with students majoring in English in the university setting in Ukraine. It summarizes the seven-year experiment of curriculum-adapted inclusions of L2 poetry writing activities in the academic process in the L2 university classroom. The activities are collaborating on a play in verse, poetry writing contests, poetry translation contests, 'bonus' poems, blogging poetry, newspaper poetry column, 'collective' poems.

The findings are as follows: implementation of such activities in the academic process is not only favorably accepted by the students, but it also boosts their confidence and fluency in the language they are learning and increases their motivation for better academic performance.

The L2 poetry writing activities described in this paper are "plug-and-play" solutions for practitioners and a valuable asset for curriculum-makers in foreign language teaching.

Keywords: foreign language, higher education, language acquisition, language teaching, language proficiency, teaching methodology, poetry writing.

Варенко Т.К. "Навчання віршування іноземною мовою на заняттях в університеті"

Вміння складати вірші певною мовою передбачає та засвідчує найвищий рівень володіння такою мовою. На підставі цієї тези було висунуто гіпотезу, що написання віршів іноземною мовою може бути цінним інструментом у підготовці фахівців, професійні обов'язки яких безпосередньо передбачають відмінне володіння іноземною мовою (перекладачі, вчителі іноземних мов). Отже, цілями наведеного дослідження є: визначення ступеня прихильності та наявності запиту серед студентів щодо написання віршів іноземною мовою як одного з методів навчання і підтвердження вищезазначеної гіпотези, що цей метод навчання і вивчення іноземної мови може використовуватися як потужний інструмент для покращення загального рівня володіння іноземною мовою, підвищення впевненості студентів у собі та своїх здібностях, сприяння забезпеченню їхнього вільного володіння іноземною мовою, а також посилення їхньої мотивації до кращої успішності.

У дослідженні надається огляд і пропонується аналіз семи різноманітних вправ із написання віршів іноземною мовою (з наведенням ілюстративних прикладів), які використовувалися в роботі зі студентами, для яких англійська мова є профільним предметом і які навчаються в українських університетах. У роботі пропонується стислий опис семирічного експерименту із включення вправ із написання віршів іноземною мовою з урахуванням вимог навчальної програми до процесу викладання іноземної мови в університеті.

Результати експерименту показали, що впровадження таких вправ до навчального процесу не лише сприймається студентами з прихильністю, але й підвищує їхню впевненість у собі та своїх здібностях, сприяє забезпеченню їхнього вільного володіння мовою, яку вони вивчають, і посилює їхню мотивацію до одержання кращих результатів у навчанні.

Вправи з віршування іноземною мовою, описані в рамках цього дослідження, є готовими рішеннями для практиків, а також цінним надбанням для розробників навчальних програм з іноземних мов.

Ключові слова: вища освіта, знання мови, іноземна мова, методика викладання, написання віршів, навчання мови, оволодіння мовою.

Варенко Т.К. “Обучение стихосложению на иностранном языке на занятиях в университете”

Умение слагать стихи на определённом языке предполагает высший уровень владения таким языком и свидетельствует о его достижении. На основании этого тезиса была выдвинута гипотеза о том, что стихосложение на иностранном языке может быть ценным инструментом в подготовке специалистов, профессиональные обязанности которых непосредственно предусматривают отличное владение иностранным языком (переводчики, учителя иностранных языков).

Соответственно, у приведённого исследования следующие цели: определение степени расположения и востребованности среди студентов в отношении написания стихов на иностранном языке как одного из методов обучения, а также подтверждение вышеуказанной гипотезы, что этот метод преподавания и изучения иностранного языка может использоваться как мощный инструмент для повышения общего уровня владения иностранным языком, укрепления уверенности студентов в себе и своих способностях, способствования обеспечению их свободного владения иностранным языком, а также усиления их мотивации к лучшей успеваемости.

В исследовании предоставляется обзор и предлагается анализ семи различных упражнений по стихосложению на иностранном языке (с приведением иллюстративных примеров), которые использовались в работе с обучающимися в украинских университетах студентами, для которых английский язык выступает профильным предметом. В работе приводится краткое описание семилетнего эксперимента по включению упражнений по стихосложению на иностранном языке с учётом требований учебной программы в процесс преподавания иностранного языка в университете.

Результаты эксперимента показали, что внедрение таких упражнений в учебный процесс не только воспринимается студентами в положительном ключе, но также повышает их уверенность в себе и своих способностях, способствует обеспечению их свободного владения изучаемым языком и усиливает их мотивацию к лучшим успехам в учёбе.

Упражнения по стихосложению на иностранном языке, описанные в рамках этого исследования, представляют собой готовые решения для практиков, а также ценный ресурс для разработчиков учебных программ по иностранным языкам.

Ключевые слова: высшее образование, знание языка, изучение языка, иностранный язык, методика преподавания, обучение языку, стихосложение.

Introduction. The ability to write poems in a particular language is a sort of linguistic intuition, the language command brought to perfection. When you are writing a poem, you are constantly going through a whole array of words and meanings to create the intended imagery, observe the meter and/or rhyme. Therefore, when used in a foreign language teaching environment, poetry writing can serve as a good tool to motivate and urge the language learners to expand their vocabulary, polish their pronunciation, develop the feel of euphony, and practice the use of diverse grammar structures.

The use of rhyming activities, songs, and poems in foreign language classrooms with kids has long won recognition and become widespread among teachers who work in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. The scholarly studies and positive results of this practice have found reflection in hundreds, if not thousands, of publications (articles, books, workbooks, teaching aids, blogposts, etc.) all over the world. As for adults' education, this practice is far less frequently used and faces a lot of skepticism despite the fact that researchers have experimentally proven, *inter alia*, the benefits of rhyming in vocabulary building and memory

development. Yet, even when listed among the foreign language classroom activities, it is predominantly in the form of memorization for subsequent recitation of the existing poetic pieces.

Since the ability to write poems of your own is indicative of and requires the highest level of the language proficiency, I believe that development of this ability ought to be an integral part of any training program that is designed to graduate specialists we depend on to ensure successful international and intercultural communication (translation, interpretation, foreign language teaching, etc.).

Background. The new Law of Ukraine *On Higher Education* with amendments as of July 01, 2014 No. 1556-VII (*Law of Ukraine On Higher Education*, 2014) provides that the state policy in higher education shall be based on the principles of preparing competitive human capital assets, and shall be realized through enhancement of higher education quality, expansion of opportunities for life-long education (Article 3). Among the main tasks of the university the law cites are ensuring creative activity of the participants of the educational process, creating adequate conditions for them to reveal and realize their abilities and talents, enrich the cultural

values and achievements of society, establish and maintain international activity in education, science, sports, arts and culture (Article 26).

Another ongoing social change in Ukraine is development of the Ukrainian Book Institute aimed at creating and implementing projects and programs for Ukrainian literature promotion in Ukraine and beyond. It intends, in particular, to finance translations of Ukrainian literature into foreign languages. Besides book publishing and promotion, the Institute will conduct literary contests and organize national and international literary events, exhibitions, fairs, workshops, conferences. This conditions the need to prepare qualified specialists, majorly translators, to help this project serve its purpose, especially where poetic works are involved.

However, preliminary studies of the foreign language majors currently offered by Ukrainian universities that graduate translators/interpreters, philologists/linguists and teachers/lecturers of English have shown that poetry writing is not on the list of the courses taught or methods used in teaching in Ukraine. Nor such courses are available within the programs preparing linguists, philologists and teachers/lecturers of the Ukrainian language (which is our native language) for that matter. At the same time, there are about a dozen of literary competitions held among university students in Ukraine every year where the participants compete for the best translated poem to/from a foreign language. This confirms the interest in and demand for such activity among students learning English as a foreign language.

Literature Overview. There is a bulk of scholars out there describing the benefits of poetry writing in foreign language acquisition for:

- developing reading fluency (Hanauer, 1997; Hetherington and Pont, 2014; Saito, 2008; Worthy and Broaddus, 2015),
- enhancing speaking and pronunciation skills (Ainy, 2008; Maley and Moulding, 1985; Robertson, 2010; Saito, 2008),
- mastering grammar (Mack, 2008; Saito, 2008; Susikaran, 2013), and
- building vocabulary (Ainy, 2008; Hess, 2003).

Many scholars agree that poetry writing helps students express their feelings, anxieties, ideas, fears, etc., thus providing them with an emotional outlet and preventing development of more serious psychological problems (Alexander and Larkin, 1994; Bolton, 1999; Fuchel and C., 1985; Kelley, 1990; Mazza, 2016).

However, even when actual poetry writing is involved, it is mostly in primary (Finch, 2002;

Kucan, 2007; Robertson, 2009), middle (Dzhukelov, 2014; Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2010; Finch, 2002; Mack, 2008; Robertson, 2009), or high (Finch, 2002; Saito, 2008; Widodo, 2016) schools.

As for the university level, there are very few examples of using poetry writing with L2 learners there. Some of such few examples are: Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, where poetry writing was used with applied linguistics students (Pushpa and Seyed, 2014); International Islamic University, Islamabad, in a BS program in creative writing for ESL (Mansoor, 2010, 2014); L2 Poetry classes at Sogang University (Disney, 2012); the General College (University of Minnesota), in the humanities course (Yahnke, 1981); Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA, ESL classes (Hanauer, 2015).

At the same time, poetry writing is part and parcel of all university programs in creative writing wherein most students acknowledge “personal development, self-knowledge and awareness, self-expression and the development of their language skills” as “the immediate attractions of the subject” (Brayfield, 2009).

When used in an L2 classroom, poetry writing activities majorly include writing students’ own versions of the example or model poem (Saito, 2008); “generating associations (eventually whole poems) from a poetic line or lines” (Hetherington and Pont, 2014); writing poetry from images (Mansoor, 2014); using association by sound for pairs of words (Smith, 2006); assuming “an improvisational stance towards writing, whereby the end result is not pre-determined by the beginning” (Smith and Dean, 2013); translating poetry, including self-translation (Loffredo and Perteghella, 2006); writing haiku (Iida, 2008; Yahnke, 1981).

According to Brande, writing is a constant interaction between and a complex mixture of the conscious and the unconscious in which the former does the shaping of what the latter has to offer (Brande, 2016). That is something always in place when mastering a foreign language. Hence, to excel in a foreign language, this is a good activity to practice.

Few or not, studies of poetry writing activities in L2 university classrooms show that:

- Poetry is an “anchor in a concrete assignment, and sail toward greater command and fluency”, a facilitation tool in foreign language acquisition, “an arena in which to respond to and reflect on what is bothering them [students], make sense of their experiences” (Saito, 2008).
- Poetry writing activities help students boost their self-esteem and understand that poetry

is a tool, “a vital linguistic instrument”, available for them to be actually freely used in productions of their own, and that it is “a democratic medium” to connect with others (Xerri, 2017).

- Poetry writing is “a site to test and contest experimental, personal modes of expression” (Disney, 2012).

- Teaching foreign language students to write poems helps transfer “creative knowledge skill-sets characterized by increased aptitudes for linguistic variety and complexity” and develop a “breadth of vision and new or substantially improved insightfulness” in terms of language acquisition (Disney, 2012).

- Poetry writing offers foreign language learners “opportunities to construct and perform agentive and authoritative subjectivities through imaginative, creative, personal or aesthetic self-articulations”, helps with “motivational acquisition of certain cultural, social and symbolic ‘capital’”, and strengthens their “sense of social existence and presence” (Zhao, 2015)

- Assignments in poetry writing enable students “to extract, mould and present their own ideas, perceptions and feelings” in an individual, personal manner (Mansoor, 2010).

- Poetry writing enables students to “explore, create, clarify, and describe ideas and concepts”, ensures their active involvement in the process, encourages them “to see ideas and concepts in new and unique ways” (McWhorter and Bullion-Mears, 1997).

- By “experimenting with rhetorical structures and manipulating image, figuration, rhythm and sound-patterns”, which are integral to the process of poem creation, students acquire “lexical and creative skill-sets” as the “intra- and inter-language processes” are simultaneously set in motion (Disney, 2012).

- Due to its linguistic and discursive properties, poetry is an “ideal, authentic context in which language forms can be discussed for comprehension purposes” (Alexander and Larkin, 1994).

The appeal of poetry writing inclusion in the foreign language classroom are the “perceived need to communicate” (Wirtz, 2006), personal development, self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-expression, language skills development, the need “to communicate effectively and correctly”, and the individual appreciation of each individual student’s contribution (Brayfield, 2009). Furthermore, I also agree with Maxim (2016) and Hanauer (2015) who maintain that introduction of poetry writing activities in the foreign language classroom creates “a more equitable atmosphere” between the learners and the instructor, develops

their individual “personal recognizable voice” as writers and, as a result, helps them “achieve a sense of agency, ownership, and emotional connection with the language they are learning”. This ensures the best results thanks to the sense of individual uniqueness and contribution inspired in each participant.

Objectives. Considering the above, I believe introduction of poetry writing in the L2 university classroom ought to complement curricula and programs designed to graduate language specialists. For the purposes of this claim, a series of experiments have been conducted with students (in different years of training) majoring in English as their non-native language at the School of Foreign Languages of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Ukraine). The objectives thereof, as well as those of this paper, are 1) to review poetry writing integration into the academic process under the L2-majoring programs to determine students’ acceptance of and demand for such activities, and 2) to confirm that they can be used as a powerful tool in improving the language command in general, strengthening students’ confidence, enhancing their L2 fluency, and boosting their motivation for better performance.

Poetry Writing Activities. To achieve the objectives set, the following L2 poetry writing activities were planned and piloted at the School of Foreign Languages of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Ukraine) in 2011-2018.

1. Collaborating on a Play in Verse

The first experiment happened in 2011 on the initiative of the students who came up with the idea of collectively writing a play script in verse in English to perform it for English Philology Department Day celebration. The script took two months and 23 students to write, rehearse, and dramatize. The writing happened in the extracurricular time. As the instructor supervising the process, I helped them with meanings and wordings, provided feedback and advice on dramatizing and writing in general. The efforts resulted in a play in verse called “Alice in Student Land” (available at: https://youtu.be/Wqumc_wBX2c). This was no mandatory assignment, yet the students were eager and excited to participate and contribute, which shows that this type of foreign language activity is motivating enough to make students devote their extracurricular time to it. As for its language acquisition potential, suffice it to say that the vocabulary and grammar used in the process and the final version were quite varied and well exceeded the scope set forth in the curriculum.

2. Poetry Writing Contests

In 2013, within the framework of the festivities held to celebrate English Philology Department Day, a contest was conducted among the students of the School of Foreign Languages for the best student-written poem in English. There were about a hundred poems submitted, ten of which were selected for recital during the celebration. The winning poems were awarded prizes (books, stuffed toys, notebooks, etc.). It is worth mentioning that poetry had not been taught as a separate course or subject at the School of Foreign Languages, nor had students been trained to write poetry in any way previously. This activity was extracurricular, too. It inspired a lot of enthusiasm and excitement on the part of the students, and the poems submitted covered a variety of topics, most of which went beyond the scope of the curriculum in terms of vocabulary and grammar.

3. Poetry Translation Contests

In response to the existing acceptance of and demand for students' self-realization as literary translators, the Department of English Translation Theory and Practice of the School of Foreign Languages (Karazin University) holds an annual student literary translation competition (launched in the 2013/2014 academic year), one of its nominations being *Poetry Translation*. Poetry translations go beyond mere conveyance of the message to present this message in a poetic form, preferably with the original meter and rhythm preserved. Thus, the process of poetry translation can be considered a poetry writing activity, although a more difficult one due to the need to stick to the message intended by the original author. And since competition is a good motivator for learners, poetry translation contests are a good way to increase the students' performance and engagement. Such competitions can be conducted on any level (within an academic group or year; within a school or a university; nationally or internationally). It is noteworthy that the number of submissions was unwavering in the poetry translation nomination over 2013-2018, which is indicative of the existing acceptance of the idea and the demand for this type of foreign language activity.

4. 'Bonus' Poems

"Bonus" poems were a standing practice in my classes while I taught English as a foreign language to students at Karazin University up until 2018. It meant that students could write a poem in English using the material (grammar structures or vocabulary) under study. Each poem written meeting the requirements would earn them extra points to be included in their overall performance score

calculation. Over the years of this practice implementation, I observed that even high-achieving students would often submit their poems for review or advice although they had no need to improve their score any higher. This means that there exists students' acceptance of and demand for this new educational philosophy of poetry writing. Therefore, it would be logical to provide students with an opportunity to satisfy their intellectual and aesthetical needs within their educational profile. Although, it is important to provide them feedback and advice on their writing so that they feel their work appreciated. I would usually do that by writing comments on the margins, or providing a small commentary in the reply letter if it is an electronic submission. Another observation regarding this activity is that the students to have written a poem(s) perform better in their tests and/or examinations where they are to demonstrate their mastery of the vocabulary/grammar under study. This means that when composing a poem while trying to fit in the 'active' words/grammatical structures, they keep casting about in their mind for the words/phrases with the best-fitting meaning and sound over and over again, which eventually makes those words/structures well imprinted in their memory. Therefore, the material learned in this manner is more likely to stay in the students' mind and be used by them afterwards than when they stuff it into their short-term memory on the eve of their examination or test.

Below is an example of a 'bonus' poem (underlined is the vocabulary under study):

The Mind of the Artist by Ruslana Gasanova

*The artist's mind is not well understood,
It's full of mysteries and dreams,
But its intent is to enrich and to do good.
Conjuring up images with fitful gleams.*

*The artist's works may be eccentric for a while,
It may be even off-the-wall and strange,
But it evokes new feelings and a pleasant smile,
And gives a push to move and change,*

*And then this power of creation
Can help to rise above mundane,
Creative impulse of sensation,
Can temper head and heart again.*

*Can elevate some common things,
And help to introduce your own conception
Of molding shapes of images that your mind brings,
Conveying into new inventions.*

*Are you an artist? Yes, you are,
And day from day we view how you create and act,
No matter really who we are,
We can all be an artist who can astonish and make effect.*

5. Blogging Poetry. Blogging poetry came as an unexpected side effect to another activity I would practice with my students: we did group peer-reviewed blogging as a modification of the students' traditional assignment of writing essays on the curriculum-dictated topics. I noticed that some students would occasionally post a poem on the given topic instead of the conventional prose essay.

Below is an example of such 'essay' posted in one of the group blogs:

Supermarket Tricks by Tamila Dubas

*In this cruel world of ads
You should be on full alert:
When you come to buy some bread
You somehow grab dessert.*

*You buy milk 'cause it's on sale,
Bags of chips will be for fun,
Then you put a cake on scales,
Then you feel the smell of buns.*

*You spend money very quickly
On the products you don't need,
You get tricked into this weekly
And the shops and stores succeed.*

*When you're walking through the aisles
Take your grocery list with.
Thus, you won't fall prey to guile
Of the advertising gist.*

*All sellers want to make you buy more,
But try to be strong to resist a temptation,
Every time when you enter a store
Keep in mind this useful information.*

(Available at: <http://marvelous34.blogspot.com/2016/05/why-art-should-be-in-our-curricula-of.html>)
The topic to elaborate on was supermarket tricks.

That got me thinking that perhaps challenging L2 students to write their essays in the form of a poem can be a good motivator to increase their interest and dedication in the writing itself instead of merely writing something as a pure formality. I am not saying it should be mandatory for everyone, but it can be suggested as an addition for an extra point or another encouragement.

6. Newspaper Poetry Column. Pursuing the desire to further boost my students' motivation for better performance in the language they are learning, as well as for the purpose of strengthening their confidence in their language skills, I ventured to take Xerri's (2017) advice and start publishing my students' writing. Thus, in February 2016, the online students' newspaper FL.Int (available at: flint.karazin.ua) came to be with a separate column for poetry. The students

whose poems (some are 'bonus' assignment poems and select blogposts) were published felt very proud and excited to see their works online, and shared them with their friends and family in social networks. From what I kept hearing, they liked and appreciated the idea and the opportunity.

Below is an example of such contribution to this column:

The Way You are Involved by Alexander Putivtsev

*If you want to show your ingenuity,
But your mind has lack of ideas,
Take a step to the part of humanity,
Which has shopping as praying on knees.*

*You've come here to buy just a little –
You'll end up with too much in your cart.
And each time your to-pay sum will kittle
And compel you to pay with your card.*

*There's no mystery, you will be followed
By some music, relaxing and chill,
Advertising – in it you'll be swallowed
Till your cart or your basket is filled.*

*If you don't want to get into a mousetrap,
You should know the basics at least:
On the one hand, you should have a shop map,
On the other, your grocery list.*

(Available at: <http://flint.karazin.ua/the-way-you-are-involved>)

7. 'Collective' Poems. Further on in the poetry writing implementation in the L2 teaching, in the 2016/2017 academic year, I tried a new activity that was different from all the described above. It required that students work in groups to produce 'collective' poems in class. This activity was practiced in two slightly different ways with regard to the difference in the intended purposes of the assignment.

'Collective' Poems. Version 1. This activity aimed to develop speaking skills and build up vocabulary around a random topic (here: future).

Here is how the activity unfolded. The students were asked to work individually to write down 10 associations they had with the word 'future' (2 minutes), which they then had to compare in pairs or groups of three and discuss what had caused the association (10 minutes). After that, they continued to work in the same pairs/groups to provide words rhyming with their associations and/or derivatives thereof (5-10 minutes). Finally, they had to compose a poem about future using the rhyming pairs they had come up with (15 minutes).

It was fascinating to observe how students were surprised to be set a task to write a poem on the spot. After active brainstorming and collaborative efforts, however, they all succeeded

in producing a poem, many much to their surprise. The poems were all recited and complemented on by their peers and the instructor.

It is worth mentioning that the students left the class that day with incredibly boosted self-confidence, excitedly talking about their experience in poetry writing in English as a foreign language, which was something that many had never ventured before even in their mother tongue. Such a boost in motivation and self-confidence is perhaps hardly possible with any other activity. Some even shared their impressions on their blogs. One student, Alina Prudnikova, was so inspired by the activity that afterwards tried it with her own students in the secondary school where she works as a teacher. Below is a poem she co-authored with her partner in my class, and one of those devised by her own students when she re-created the activity in her own classroom.

An example from my classroom:

*In future technology will eliminate philology,
Or maybe it won't? Who knows, I don't.
There will be no grammar,
Everyone will talk with a stammer,
Like beaten on the head with a hammer.
And if you don't like it, you'll be thrown in a slammer.
But is there any hope?
Or things just careering down a slope?
Many of us will definitely say nope!
But others are already at the end of their rope,
And are about to be real dopes.
Either that or pull out all of the stops,
There must be someone putting underwater rocks,
So that ships of progress will stay in their docks.
But let's put away unwillingness,
And decide our plans won't be meaningless.*

An example from Alina Prudnikova's classroom:

*In future we won't have problems.
You will feel no losses.
You will have no catastrophe,
Because will leave in other city.
And will enter any university.
You will pass all exams,
And won't have any jams.
And finally there will be a summer,
And you will find a real lover.
You will receive many presents,
So you won't need to take any depressants.
The will be your future husband,
And your every day will be unaccustomed.
You will become a wife,
And will get an adorably life.*

(Available at: <http://noordinaryblogofprudnyasha.blogspot.com/2016/12/rhyme-time.html>)

'Collective' Poems. Version 2. This activity aimed to deepen the in-context understanding and check the degree of mastery in the grammar topic practiced during the previous classes (here: Verbals).

This activity was organized as follows. The students were asked to work in pairs or groups of three to write down as many gerunds and participles as they could in three minutes. The winning pair/group got the cheers from the peers and the instructor. After that, the students continued to work in the same pairs/groups to match the words they had on their lists and/or come up with new ones to create as many rhyming pairs as possible (5-10 minutes). The winning pair/group got the cheers from the peers and the instructor. Finally, they had to collaborate in the same pairs/groups to compose a poem using the rhyming pairs they had put down (15 minutes). The students were at first shocked at being given a task to write a poem on the spot, but the surprise was fleeting, followed by active brainstorming and joint efforts on their 'collective' masterpieces. Again, like in the previous version, all the teams succeeded in producing a poem, and all the poems were recited to the cheers and applause of the peers and the instructor. The excitement and the boost in their self-confidence conditioned by the fact that they had managed to write a piece of poetry in English as a foreign language (something never ventured before in their mother tongue) were huge. I can hardly remember a time they were more proud of themselves during or after an English class.

Below is an example of a poem written during this activity by Ksenia Bespalchenko and Vlad Kravtsev:

*He went on printing,
While in his armchair sitting,
With his mother fighting
Over his bad writing.
He promised to give up smoking
Pretending he was joking.
This was so heart-breaking
Even after waking.
Never minded sleeping.
Sitting at the lesson,
Hearing teacher's screaming
He wishes he were dreaming.
The worst nightmare ever,
Remember it forever.*

These experiments have strengthened my conviction that teaching English poetry writing is an effective technique to be used for foreign language acquisition in terms of both motivation and self-confidence enhancement and overall language command improvement.

In the feedback received from the students from both activities described above was that most admitted that it had been the first and only poem ever written and that they really liked the experience and the feeling that came along with it (it felt great to know that they had actually written a poem in English!). All agreed that it was a useful activity in terms of both grammar revision and practice and overall English command boost. Many voiced the opinion that more activities like this should be practiced in their language routine.

Summing up, I should also point out that the Version 2 students had the activity on the eve of their test in the subject, and their performance in the test was better compared to that in the previous test, for which they had practiced by completing regular drills.

Instructor's Role. When it is introduced in the teaching routine for the first time, poetry writing is an activity many students may be prejudiced against and threatened by the prospect of failing. That is why it is the responsibility of the instructor to make sure that this initial fear the students may feel is prevented and soothed, and that it is not interfering with the students' performance.

Practice shows that the best way to achieve this goal is by leading them by your personal example. For instance, when you are asking your students to write a poem using the vocabulary or grammar under study, recite right away a piece of your own making or improvise a piece on the spot with such vocabulary/grammar included. If it is a blog you want your students to write their poetry on, you can be the first to post your own poem there to set the mood.

Here are some examples I recited for my students to illustrate it was possible to compose a poem meeting these requirements:

An example of a poem with the arts-related vocabulary under study (underlined):

*He would paint from intuition
Breaking thus with the tradition,
And he left a big impression
With a transient expression.*

An example of a poem with the grammar under study (underlined):

*To read is an untamed desire,
A passion that compels your mind
To hinge on dreams that take you higher
With each new excerpt more refined.*

An example of a blogpost:

*Hi everyone! Your blog is ready.
I hope you will enjoy your while
And wish you that your hand be steady
Creating posts without guile.*

(Available at: <http://yaa42.blogspot.com/2014/09/welcome.htm>)

It is also good to ensure a smooth lead-in into poetry writing. It means that students do not learn that they are going to write a poem until they are writing it. For example, like in the case of the 'collective' poem, the lead-in consisted in associations, followed by brainstorming of rhyming words, and only after that, when the students were mentally warmed up enough, there came the actual task of writing a poem. When the first experience in poetry writing is organized in this manner, the students do not really and fully comprehend what has hit them until they are already excited about the fact that they have done it. The point at this stage is to not give them time to start thinking about what they are doing. This approach enables the instructor to bypass the prejudices and fears that may be associated with this type of activity and focus on the results rather than the process. Thus, the students get enough positive impressions to open up to and welcome more activities like that in future.

Conclusion. The feedback I keep receiving from my students, the observations on their subsequent overall performance improvement, the enthusiasm with which they participated in poetry writing activities (with not a single student staying idle or sitting it out) indicates in 100% cases that L2 poetry writing activities are in demand and enthusiastically welcomed by the students. If regularly practiced, such activities have the potential to significantly improve the quality of training the students receive within their major, improve their foreign language skills, and, as a result, make them more competitive and better qualified professionals in their careers as translators and foreign language teachers.

In the longer view, if a course in L2 poetry writing is established and included in the corresponding curricula, it will prove a valuable asset in the training of better qualified and competitive translators/interpreters, philologists/linguists and teachers/lecturers who will produce better quality translations and better quality teaching for the generations-to-come. In even farther perspective, the graduates from such programs will be fit to ensure quality translations of the cultural and particularly literary heritage of Ukraine that has many gifted poets and writers whose works are worth translating into foreign languages for the world to know.

I would also like to add that the poetry writing activities described in this paper are suitable for any foreign language teaching practice and easily adaptable in terms of their use with L2 learners of any level without limitations of the university setting or L2 majors.

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