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Creative Writing and Intersemiotic Translation in the English Language Classroom: Turning Shapes and Colours into Flash Fiction

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Abstract

This paper explores the integration of creative writing and intersemiotic translation as a multifaceted approach to English language learning. The translation between different semiotic systems (in this case from visual to textual), combined with creative writing, offers a rich pedagogical framework for engaging language learners in deep, meaningful interaction with the target language. The methodology employed a blended approach, incorporating Task-Based Language Teaching, Project-Based Learning, and learning by doing, wherein learners systematically progressed through a series of gradual activities designed to culminate in the composition of a concise narrative inspired by a visual artwork. Participants in the project were advanced-level students in their second year of the bachelor's degree program in Foreign Languages and Cultures.Findings indicate that the students demonstrated significant improvement in both language proficiency and intercultural competence. Furthermore, the study found that these activities fostered a deeper emotional and cognitive engagement with the learning material, facilitating a more personal approach to language acquisition.Incorporating creative and multimodal approaches into the curriculum can lead to more effective and immersive language learning experiences. This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on multimodal pedagogies and opens new avenues for exploring how creative writing and intersemiotic translation can be exploited to support language and linguistics learners in an increasingly interconnected and semiotically complex world.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, intersemiotic translation, literary linguistics, creative writing.

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1. Introduction: theoretical background and methodology

The aim of this paper is to explore the intersection between creative writing and intersemiotic translation in a foreign language learning environment. The teaching module outlined here can be regarded as a voyage through the margins, which can be understood as boundaries between disciplines but also as seemingly distant, peripheral areas in relation to language and linguistics learning. In fact, for various reasons, these margins contribute to language enhancement through creativity. Learners feel like protagonists of an experience that, leveraging their passions and emotions, leads them to create something original, personal, and meaningful, often reflecting their experiences.

In a foreign language learning context, the use of literature and creative writing fosters learners' spontaneous self-expression, thereby enhancing their proficiency in reading and writing skills. Creativity serves to 'distract' from the learning objective, allowing for spontaneous invention, alleviating apprehensions regarding peer and instructor judgment. Maley (2012) effectively summarizes the reasons why creative writing and literature have proven to be valuable allies in language teaching by increasing proficiency in language across various dimensions: syntax, lexicon, phonetics, and communication; by nurturing a sense of playfulness, motivating students to creatively engage with language and fostering a willingness to experiment and explore; by promoting a balanced use of both the analytical and creative sides of the brain; by cultivating self-confidence, thereby enhancing motivation levels, and by improving comprehension through creative writing endeavours, enabling students to grasp the mechanics of text construction and aiding in reading comprehension. These considerations should not be deemed unexpected, as creative writing, in contrast to functional and guided writing, accesses emotions and spontaneity, thus activating the right hemisphere of the brain and fostering a harmonious equilibrium between logical and intuitive faculties (Sperry 1961; Krashen 1977; Gardner 1982; Sachs 1987).

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In a world dominated by images, the challenge was to start from a painting chosen by the students and try to transform it into a story with the aim of activating the linguistic functions that arise from cognitive reactions to visual elements, as Hunt explains well (2013, 110):

> It used to be thought that language was confined to the left hemisphere, but it has now become clear that, whilst the left brain possesses the complete lexicon and rules of syntax and is responsible for linear and clear-cut meanings, the right hemisphere has a number of very subtle but intriguing linguistic functions, including the processing of images and symbols, metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, inference and allusion, personification, prosody, assonance and alliteration. All of these are central features of poetry or poetic language, and indeed of creative writing as a whole.

It should be emphasized that the focus here is not on intersemiotic translation, art, or literature per se, but on English language learning. Students are not meant to become writers, artists, or critics, but rather to use the subjects they are passionate about as stimuli to enhance and refine their language skills. Paintings and literature become tools to build and consolidate comprehensive language proficiency. The aim is to analyse and interpret the meanings of a painting, a non-verbal text, and transport them beyond the visual boundary, stepping out of the frame to tell a story and practice written production, which seems to have become increasingly marginal in today's culture and education.

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Figure 1 *Escapando de la Crítica*, Pere Borrell del Caso (1874)

Intersemiotic translation is the act of transposing signification from one semiotic domain to another, ensuring that the meanings conveyed in the translated message retain their intrinsic identity (Kujawska 2001, 187). Of course, the transition from an image to a narrative text is drastic, especially because the visual element can be interpreted in several ways. A painting can evoke different emotions and thoughts, and consequently, the translated meaning can vary from student to student. Indeed, in some cases, students who had chosen the same painting created profoundly distinct narratives (in terms of genre, atmosphere, plot, etc.). For this reason, it is deemed appropriate to complement the concept of intersemiotic translation with that of ekphrasis, which aims to convey the essence and emotional impact of an artwork through words. However, the task assigned to the students involves more than a mere vivid description of a painting, requiring instead its transformation into a narrative that integrates descriptive, narrative, and dialogic components. In this context, we cannot consider the outcomes as products that remain faithful or identical to the meaning and underlying essence of the original text. This is

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because, aside from varying interpretations, students may focus on only one theme among many for their written work.

Therefore, it is more precise to classify these outcomes as adaptations rather than translations, since the final product is not intended to replicate the original text but to serve as an interpretation and re-creation. This involves a transformative process where the new work reconfigures the source material within a different medium (Hutcheon 2006).

The teaching methodology employed in this project integrates three approaches, Task-Based Learning (TBL), Project-Based Learning (PBL), and Learning by Doing, all centred around active and practical learning. TBL is an approach to teaching foreign languages that focuses on carrying out specific activities or tasks to enhance language learning. This approach places students at the centre of the learning process, encouraging them to actively use the target language for practical purposes (Nunan 1991, 2004; González-Davies, 2004; Ellis 2006, 2009). Nunan (1989, 10) defines a task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on the meaning rather than form" . PBL involves learners working on extended, often interdisciplinary projects that require inquiry, collaboration, and critical thinking (Beckett 2006, Boss et al. 2007). Projects culminate in a final product – a short story in our case – that demonstrates understanding and mastery of the topic.

TBL and PBL can be highly effective approaches to teaching creative writing, as they provide students with opportunities to engage in authentic, real-world writing tasks. For example, students often choose to write short stories that address contemporary social issues. Furthermore, students are particularly motivated because they are allowed to express their own voices and perspectives and, at the end of the project, they will have created something personal, a completely unique creative product resulting from reflections and direct experiences, which are the main elements of the third method used here, that is

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learning by doing, or experiential learning, which I habitually summarise with the word 'e*do*cation'. TBL and PBL are not conflicting approaches, as has sometimes been suggested. Rather, they can be effectively combined within a cohesive educational framework. This integration can be achieved through the implementation of a series of short and concrete tasks designed to address specific learning objectives. These tasks serve to gradually guide students towards the realization of the final project.

2. Module *Shortelling: from paintings to flash fiction*[1]

Target audience and language level

- Second-year undergraduate students (C1 level of the CEFR).

Aims

- Understanding and exploring the process of translating between different modes of communication, such as from visual art to written text.
- Understanding how creative writing works and producing creative texts of different genres.
- Developing skills in analysing and interpreting both visual and textual elements.
- Promoting interdisciplinary learning by bridging the gap between visual arts, literature, translation, and language studies;
- Providing practical in class experience through hands-on tasks and projects.

[1] The course lasts 45 hours and is divided into two modules. The first, consisting of 24 hours, is the one presented here. Due to space constraints, only some lessons will be detailed (topics 1, 2, and 4); for lessons on style, reference is made to Barone, *La componente linguistica e stilistica nella scrittura creaiva* (Barone et al. 2021). The second module (*Shortelling*: from literature to screen) involves the reverse path, from words to images. Students are engaged in writing a screenplay for a short film based on an English literary work that must be modernized and contain innovative elements compared to the original text (spin-offs, deeper exploration of certain characters, addition of scenes, etc.). The best screenplays will be transformed into scripts, and the students will shoot their short films. The lessons presented here will be included in a monograph that will illustrate the entire course.

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Topics and tasks

1. Text, textuality, text types/genres, textual competence (two lessons)
2. Intersemiotic translation and multimodality (two lessons)
3. Style, register, ambience, stylistics (two lessons)
4. Further insights into stylistics: foregrounding, showing and telling (one lesson)
5. In class task: Continue the story given the opening lines (one lesson)
6. In class tasks: analysis of selected paintings and discussion (one lesson);
7. Narratology and characteristics of the short story (two lessons)
8. In class task: Fairy tale rewriting/modernization. (This is the final in class task and the first in which students challenge themselves with writing a complete story) (one lesson)

Short story assignment

You are required to write a short story of minimum 600 words / maximum 1500. The choice of the genre is free. You can write either individually or collaboratively in maximum 3. Your story must be based on a painting and must take into consideration all the aspects dealt with throughout the module.

Assessment criteria

25 % – The idea behind the story and the connections with the chosen painting.

15% – Plot and pacing

The framework of the story. The actions, events and turning points that propel the story forward. How the story unfolds (points for originality/unpredictability). The timing of the action.

20% – Language 1

Grammar: spelling, punctuation, syntax.

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20% - Language 2

Vocabulary choices: appropriateness, richness, and/or originality.

20 % – Style

Overall quality of the writing. Original use of language. Register that reflects the plot and characters, ability to show things/situations/characters. Use of figures of speech.

2.1 Lessons 1 and 2: Text, textuality, text types/genres, textual competence, literary and non-literary language

a. Lesson 1

Task

The first question I ask students is "What is a text?". I invite them to read some excerpts and tell me which of those can be defined as a text and why. NOTE WELL: only **ONE** answer is right.

1. HELP!!!
2. It seemed colder on the long ride back to Winterfell, though the wind had died by then and the sun was higher in the sky. Bran rode with his brothers, well ahead of the main party, his pony struggling hard to keep up with their horses.
3. Dear Claire, I'm writing to tell you that I finally found the courage to leave (…)
4. *Going to* is often interchangeable with the present progressive, but its use does emphasise the idea of a decision that has been made. It is also used to make predictions based on present evidence.
5. "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore".

The class generally reacts almost immediately by stating that the only correct answer is number 2 (Martin 2011, 15) because, assuming that only one answer is correct, they associate the text with the novel form, while a cry for help, a letter, a grammatical rule, and a line from a movie are not taken into consideration. The point is that only a few reflect and are

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not misled by the "NOTE WELL: only ONE answer is right", and guess that the only correct answer is that they are all texts.

Theory box (quotes from scholars)

Text

> A pre-theoretical term used in linguistics and phonetics to refer to a stretch of language recorded for the purpose of analysis and description. What is important to note is that texts may refer to collections of written or spoken material (the latter having been transcribed in some way), e.g. conversation, monologues, rituals, and so on. (…) Texts are seen as language units which have a definable communicative function, characterized by such principles as cohesion, coherence and informativeness, which can be used to provide a formal definition of what constitutes their identifying textuality or texture. On the basis of these principles, texts are classified into text types, or genres, such as road signs, news reports, poems, conversations, etc. (Crystal 2008, 482).

> Texts can come in all shapes and sizes: they can correspond in extent to any linguistic unit: letter, sound, word, sentence, combination of sentences. To put the matter more brisky, I identify a text not by its linguistic extent but by its social intent (Widdowson 2004, 8).

Text types

Students are introduced to the concepts of text types and genres through a schematic summary that includes all the text types (descriptive, narrative, argumentative, instructive/procedural, and expository/didactic), their communicative purposes, and a list of genres for each category. They are then invited to provide examples for each category and genre.

Textual competence tasks

The second part of lesson 1 is dedicated to textual competence, that is the ability which allows to produce and recognize texts by interpreting them.

It consists in attaching a type, a genre, a class to a text: for instance, to start reading/listening and soon understand you are reading/listening to a joke, weather forecast, an ad, or the

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instructions for your microwave, but also in recognising elements of intertextuality when reading something.

Task

Guess the context by means if isolated words. These words were extracted from some texts. What are these texts about? Can you identify a genre?

Sets of words

1. Mass, communication, sell, buy, television set, plug, running.
2. Monument, site, found, foundations, build, tools, stone.
3. Trip, world, mountain, sea, map, ocean, ship, islands.
4. Handshake, contract, career, competitive world, large amounts, graph, power.
5. Children, hunger, pain, dirt, crying, fight, weapons, surgery, wounds.
6. Condemnation, truth, accusations, lies, repentance, suffer, pride, honesty, blindness, duty, crime.
7. Fragile, special handling, damaged, broken.

During the brainstorming session that follows the reading of the words, students are almost always certain to guess the context correctly. For example, they associate set number 1 with advertising, number 2 with archaeology, number 3 with tourism, number 4 with marketing or economics in general, number 5 with humanitarian initiatives, number 6 with the religious world or literary fiction, and number 7 with instructions on packages containing fragile items. When they later discover that none of their hypotheses were correct but that I had extracted those words from song lyrics by Depeche Mode, they are surprised, but not disappointed. Instead, they are amused and engaged, and they understand that they must always consider the context before grasping the meaning or the genre of something.

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b. Lesson 2

Task

Remaining in the field of textual competence, I ask students to read and understand larger portions of texts with the same aim, that is the individuation of the right genre. Try to tell me what you would highlight in these texts. What would you include in your text analysis? What genre do you think these texts belong to and why?

Text 1

> And now, before proceeding to our subject proper, **let me beg the reader's attention** to an excerpt or two from a somewhat remarkable letter, **which appears to have been found corked in a bottle and floating on the Mare Tenebrarum** – an ocean well described by the Nubian geographer, Ptolemy Hephestion, but little frequented in modern days unless by the Transcendentalists and some other divers for crotchets. The date of this letter, I confess, surprises me even more particularly than its contents; for **it seems to have been written in the year Two thousand eight hundred and forty-eight**.

Text 2

> The expression of the law may be thus generalized: – the number of **light-particles** (or, if the phrase be preferred, the number of **light-impressions**) received upon **the shifting plane**, will be **inversely proportional with the squares of the distances of the plane**. Generalizing yet again, we may say that the diffusion – the scattering – **the irradiation**, in a word – is **directly proportional with the squares of the distances.**

After carefully reading the excerpts, the students have no doubts. The first text belongs to literary language, while the second one belongs to scientific language (see the bold parts that students usually underline to justify their answer). Actually, the two excerpts belong to the same text, *Eureka* by Edgar Allan Poe (1848, 6-7 and 36-37), an implicitly ambiguous text that defies classification within a specific genre. It is undoubtedly an essay, but the question that many have raised is whether it is literary or scientific.

This task allows me to open a parenthesis and explain the difference between scientific language and literary language, but above all, it allows me to discuss an aspect that I consider fundamental and that concerns the strong division that still exists today between the scientific world and the literary world.

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Explanation Box

As a rule, the main differences between scientific and literary language regard communicative aims; scientific language is predominantly denotative while literary language is characterised by a high frequency of connotative uses. Such differences are present at all levels of analysis, from morphology to pragmatics and they have an impact on lexis, syntax, and semantics. It goes without saying that language itself does not change in scientific or literary texts; what changes is the use of language in specific situations, with the linguistic code employed in a different way compared to common usage. In the field of specialised languages, the different uses of the linguistic code develop in relation to the various scientific disciplines, which in turn come to be intertwined and share the operative techniques and ways of using symbols and words. In general, sector-specific languages are characterised above all by monoreferentiality, absence of ambiguity, objectivity, economy, depersonalisation and appropriateness as well as by what might be defined as a lack of style, while literary language can be considered, albeit a great simplification, as at the opposite extreme.

Returning to the Poe excerpts, it seems easy to immediately classify them. What is instantly clear is that in the first example we find very precise stylistic choices, while in the second we notice a lack of style. The lexical, stylistic and semantic choices in the first excerpt immediately reveal the literary and fictional nature of the text and the parts in bold explain why; the use of the first person and the link with the receiver, the lexical choices that are little suited to science ("let me beg the reader's attention, corked in a bottle and floating in the Mare Tenebrarum, divers for crotchets, I confess, I fancy") and above all the author's inventions concerning the "Mare Tenebrarum" and the "Nubian geographer, Ptolemy Hephestion". We should also note the year of the fictitious letter, 2848, which makes the text decidedly non-scientific. The second excerpt is characterised by precision, the use of technical terms and modal verbs, and above all by the above introduced concept of

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depersonalisation through the use of the personal pronoun *we* and no direct reference to the author.

Is *Eureka* a scientific or literary text? the critics are divided on two fronts: some have defined the work as a literary composition saturated with exercises in style without any foundation of truth; others have considered it, and continue to consider it, a scientific text that heralds discoveries that would only be made many years later and that is based on real scientific sources. In this connection, for example, we read that "Poe's *Eureka* scoops the Big Bang Theory by eighty years. It wasn't until 1927 that Georges Lemaître, a Belgian priest, asserted that the explosion of an atom (the Big Bang) sometime between 10 and 20 billion years ago was responsible for the creation of the universe" (Bloomfield 2007, 175). But, aside from the reflections on the content of the text, here we are interested in other, purely linguistic questions. Starting from the considerations previously made, and analysing the text in search of textuality conditions, can we place it in the scientific genre? Is the register used literary or scientific? To what extent are the argumentative and descriptive sequences typical of the scientific genre? At the same time, I wonder whether it is appropriate and sensible to classify a text at all costs within a specific category. The charming power of this text lies precisely in its hybrid nature, in crossing the margins, and not for this reason being considered marginal by the scientific world.

I conclude this lesson by telling the students that the divide between science and literature, or between scientists and literary scholars, remains significant today, with little change since Snow (1959, 4, 17, 19) wrote about it in his essay *The Two Cultures*:

> Two polar groups: at one pole we have the literary intellectuals, who incidentally while no one was looking took to referring to themselves as intellectuals, as though there were no others… Literary intellectuals at one pole – on the other scientists, and as the most representative, the physical scientists. Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension – sometimes (particularly among the young) hostility and dislike, but most of all lack of understanding. They have a curious distorted image of each other. […] There seems then to be no place where the two cultures meet. The clashing point of two subjects, two disciplines, two cultures – of two galaxies, so far as that goes – ought to produce creative chances. The chances are there now. But they are there, as it

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> were, in a vacuum, because those in the two cultures can't talk to each other. […] There is only one way out of this: it is, of course, by rethinking our education.

2.2 Lessons 3 and 4: Multimodality and intersemiotic translation

c. Lesson 3

Before involving the class in specific tasks, I introduce the concepts of multimodality and intersemiotic translation, which are often new to learners.

Explanation box

Our society is profoundly multimodal, and all texts incorporate various semiotic resources to create and convey meaning. This meaning-making engine is particularly present in contemporary texts which can rely on the incessant progress if ICTs and the Internet. Technology superpower has sped up the combination of the above-mentioned semiotic resources in a way which was unconceivable when, chiefly in language teaching situations, teachers and students could use and exploit printed texts only. One of the main objectives of this lesson, and of the module in general, is to highlight the vital importance of motivation in language learning. The use of highly engaging materials, drawn from what students love (music, cinema, literature, etc.), helps teachers establish a strong connection with the learners, whose feedback and output will most likely be positive.

Multimodality theory explores the diverse range of methods individuals employ to communicate and convey their thoughts and feelings. Consequently, people can seamlessly integrate multiple modes - such as art, writing, and music - into their creative expressions. A mode, in this context, refers to a recognized communication channel within a culture. These channels encompass various forms, including writing, gestures, postures, gazes, font styles and colours, images, videos, music, noises, and the intricate interactions among them (Kress 2000; Kress, Van Leeuwen 2001, Kress 2009).

In this part of the lesson, students are confronted with two tasks, but I will present only one due to space constraints.

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Task

After reading the following text, try to visualize images related to a possible story: people involved, objects, colours, atmosphere, setting, etc. Anything that comes to mind.

> Reach out and touch faith
> Your own personal Jesus
> Someone to hear your prayers, someone who cares
> Feeling unknown and you're all alone
> Flesh and bone by the telephone
> Lift up the receiver, I'll make you a believer
> Take second best, put me to the test
> Things on your chest you need to confess
> I will deliver
> You know I'm a forgiver
> Reach out and touch faith (*Personal Jesus*, Depeche Mode)

After the discussion, students watch two videoclips of the song. The first is by Depeche Mode, the second is by Marilyn Manson, and they realize that the same words accompanied by the two videos drastically change in meaning. Themes, atmosphere, and tone considerably shift, demonstrating that the interaction of diverse semiotic resources, despite sharing the same verbal text, can generate profoundly different worlds. Multimodality is closely linked to intersemiotic translation (a videoclip based on a song being a prime example).

Intersemiotic transposition offers students the opportunity to explore their creativity. By inviting them to adapt a concept from one expressive mode to another, creative thinking and imagination are stimulated and that is precisely the general aim of this module.

d. Lesson 4

Students analyse two paintings trying to imagine possible stories and then they read an intersemiotic adaptation of them in search of connections.

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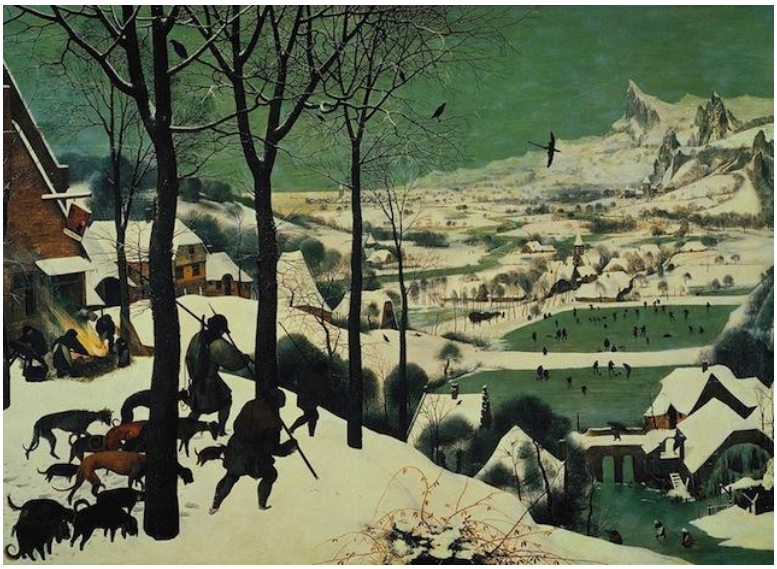

Figure 2 *The Hunters in the Snow*, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1565)

Figure 3 *The Starry Night*, Vincent Van Gogh (1889)

Task

Analyse the two paintings from a visual perspective breaking down elements such as composition, colours, mood, symbolism, and narrative potential. Identify the key elements and possible themes within the painting that you want to capture in your fiction writing. This could include characters, settings, emotions, or symbols. Use vivid and descriptive

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language to convey the visual aspects of the painting in your writing. Describe the scenes, characters, and settings in a way that brings them to life for the reader, capturing the essence of the original painting. Develop a narrative structure that incorporates the themes and elements of the painting. This could involve creating characters and plotlines inspired by the painting, or even imagining the events leading up to or following the scene depicted. Remember that intersemiotic transposition is not about creating an exact replica of the painting in written form, but rather about interpreting and reimagining it in a new medium.

Class discussion

Seek feedback from others and be open to making further revisions based on their input. Intersemiotic transposition is a collaborative process, and feedback can help you refine your writing and enhance its impact.

It is important to specify that, at this stage, students do not yet possess elements of creative writing that will be addressed in subsequent lessons. However, it is interesting to see how they react naturally without instructions and constraints, and then move on to theoretical concepts and specific writing advice in a pathway that progresses from practice to theory. After this discussion, the students read two poems (*The Starry Night* by Anne Sexton and *Hunters in the Snow* by William Carlos Williams) inspired by those paintings to have an insight into how it is possible to transpose an image into a literary text. Despite the difference in genre, namely poetry rather than prose, this reading exercise can facilitate their comprehension of the process of intersemiotic transposition and the literary interpretation of visual material.

2.3 Lesson 7: Introducing the writing techniques of foregrounding and showing vs. telling

Explanation box

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Foregrounding serves as a literary technique employed to emphasize certain elements within a text, distinguishing them from the surrounding words. This method highlights specific portions of the text that are deemed crucial for comprehending and interpreting the author's style. Its application extends across all levels of linguistic analysis: phonology, graphology, morphology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Garvin 1964, Short 1996, Hall 2005, Leech 2013, Scott 2013). We distinguish two types of foregrounding:

- parallelism (the repetition of a word, sound, idea, pattern, etc.);
- deviation (when you 'deviate' from what is perceived as the norm of the language, when rules are broken. Deviations can be lexical, grammatical, phonological, graphological, semantic, dialectal, but also of register and style). "In short, an unusual linguistic usage would be foregrounded against the background of standard language, and thus would stan out" (Scott, 2013, 4).

Students read an example in which the obsessive repetition of certain words enhances the sense of anguish and emotional turmoil serving as an emotive trigger.

> Not hear it? – yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long – long – long – many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it – yet I dared not – oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! – I dared not – I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them – many, many days ago – yet I dared not – I dared not speak! (Poe 1985, 182).

Another significant aspect of creative writing pertains to the techniques of showing and telling. The telling vs. showing distinction captures two different modes of presenting events in a narrative. In the showing mode, the narrative evokes in readers the impression that they are shown the events of the story or that they somehow witness them, while in the telling mode, the narrative evokes in readers the impression that they are told about the events. When you tell rather than show, you simply inform your reader rather than allowing him to deduce anything. You're supplying information by simply stating it. You

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might report that a character is 'tall', or 'angry', or 'cold', or 'tired'. When employing the technique of showing, the reader becomes an active participant in the narrative experience. Rather than merely receiving information passively, the reader engages in mental visualization, allowing them to draw the intended conclusions. An example could be:

- Telling: Claire was angry
- Showing: Claire stormed into the room, her footsteps heavy against the floorboards. Her jaw clenched as she forcefully crossed her arms over her chest, her narrowed eyes flashing with suppressed rage. Claire's voice, when she finally spoke, was strident, each word punctuated by a sharp exhale as she struggled to contain the storm of emotions growing within her.

In short, as Joseph Conrad (2018, 7) suggests, "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see! That – and no more; and it is everything!".

Task

These are 'telling' sentences. Transform them into examples of showing.

1. After the class, Gary went home in a bad mood.
2. She was an unusual woman.
3. He was so happy!

Due to space constraints, I will present just two productions written by the students. She was an unusual woman.

> She had long curly hair pulled back into a messy bun and big blue glasses that matched the color of her eyes, perhaps too large for her face. She dressed in eccentric colors: wearing a light green pullover and a red skirt paired with stockings featuring yellow and black stripes, resembling a bee! She had an iguana as a pet, which she took for a walk every morning before going to work. That was rather weird.

After the class, Gary went home in a bad mood.

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He arrived and slammed the door behind him without even saying hello to his mother. His eyes were full of tears and anger, and he nervously and constantly cracked his fingers. His face seemed like the perfect blend of the characters "Anger" and "Sadness" from the cartoon "Inside Out". He was completely red, with veins pulsing on his neck, and his eyes seemed to belong to someone on the brink of a meltdown. He paced back and forth in his room like a caged animal and constantly bit his chapped lips. In a matter of minutes, his room became a mess as he threw everything he came across onto the ground, even breaking his mom's favourite lamp.

3. Final work and conclusion

The module presented here has produced unexpected and astonishing results, which can be attributed to the influence that fields like literature and visual arts can have on learners, as well as to the freedom of expression. On more than one occasion, at the end of the students' stories, I found annotations that testified to the effectiveness of the task even in terms of personal and emotional growth. For example, I read: Dear Professor, regardless of what you will think of my short story and of the evaluation, I would like to thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to write about it. It helps to render this page of my life, which will always be a part of me, less oppressive. It is extremely touching and encouraging to realize that a language course can generate impacts of such magnitude, and that the writing of a story contributed to alleviating the weight of a particularly hard life experience.

Returning to the proposed teaching module, literature and art in general emerge prominently as important resources in language learning, offering a wide range of benefits that go beyond simple acquisition of vocabulary and grammar. They stimulate intellectual curiosity, fuel creativity, and promote a deeper understanding of human complexity. Carter and McCarthy (2006) have highlighted the intrinsic link between creativity and linguistic competence, positing that linguistic creativity reflects an individual's mastery of the linguistic resources available within their language repertoire, and as Hall (2005) points out, using literature and creative writing in foreign language environments has several advantages that go from vocabulary acquisition to reading skills, promotion of

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interpretative and inferential skills to psycholinguistic aspects (focus on form, discourse processing skills etc.).

As I have previously stated, this approach has produced highly satisfying results, and I have frequently found myself appreciating the stories written by students, particularly those that transport you into the painted scene while reading, making it seem as if you were witnessing the events unfold. This exemplifies the power of multimodality, serving as both a meaning-making and a meaning-amplifying engine.

One of the examples that has left a lasting impression on me is a narrative depicting Mariko's final moments a few minutes before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Figure 4 *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*, Claude Monet (1899)

The story, entitled *The Sky over the City*, opens with a precise date and time: August 6, 1945, 7:15 AM, and this alone evokes strong emotions even before starting to read the story. It portrays the daily routine of preparing breakfast for the child before school, washing dishes, and saying goodbye to the little one as she heads to school with a friend. The radio announces the presence of American planes flying over the city's sky, though it is likely just

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a reconnaissance mission. Mariko senses a feeling of anguish. This is the final part of the story:

> She needed some fresh air, so she stepped outside. At the rear of the house lay a magnificent Japanese garden, adorned with numerous trees, flowers, and a charming pond with a small bridge. She had always loved that place, it was the most beautiful on Earth to her. Taking a few deep breaths, she wandered through the garden, finding relief in its serenity.
> Arriving at the bridge, she paused in the middle, resting her elbows on the railing. Tears welled up in her eyes, falling from her cheeks and into the still water below. Despite enduring so much, she could no longer suppress her emotions. It was then that she realized she still clutched Yun's letter. Opening it, she read his words once more:
> "My dear Mariko, today I cannot write for long. Here, we are working harder than ever; some say the war will end soon. I truly hope so. I miss you, my dear, and I miss our little Kanao. I keep thinking of you both, and the thought of seeing you is the only thing that brings a smile to my face now. Soon, I will come home to you, I promise. Until then, you must remain strong, as I know you are.
> I love you, yours, Yun".
> Once again, Yun's words and familiar handwriting managed to soothe her. She folded the paper and kissed it tenderly, then pressed it against her heart, longing to feel Yun's presence. A gentle breeze rustled through the willow branches, while the flowers stretched toward the sky, basking in the sunlight that had emerged after three days of inclement weather. All was quiet, all was peaceful. Mariko closed her eyes, envisioning Yun and Kanao with Momo the giraffe, all smiling. She breathed deeply. It was 8:15 AM, and a blinding light illuminated the sky over Hiroshima.

A sequence of familiar events is interrupted by one of the most terrible and tragic events in history, which is not described explicitly, since the narration halts when Mariko catches sight of the blinding light. However, we are all aware of the consequences and the magnitude of the horror. This permeates the story with both power and delicacy, rendering it highly poetic.

To conclude, engaging in creative writing facilitates students in approaching language across various levels of analysis, thereby fostering a closer connection to the field of linguistics. As Matthews (2014, VII) suggests when defining the word 'linguistics', "a range of other disciplines, from the study of literature to computer science, deal with language in one way or another, and the boundaries between them and linguistics are not fixed. It would indeed be a pity if they were".

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Reflecting on how creative writing works and attempting to express oneself in a literary manner can be beneficial from various perspectives such as 1. language mastery with a deeper understanding of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics because creative writing requires careful consideration of word choice and precision to evoke desired emotions, create vivid imagery, and convey nuanced meanings. 2. Structural awareness (sentences and paragraph organization, and narrative coherence) that enables students to construct cohesive and engaging texts. 3. Stylistic variation in search of distinct voices, moods, and atmospheres in their work not to mention the exploration of different registers and/or dialects. Incorporating creative writing, multimodality, and intersemiotic approaches into a foreign language/linguistics course not only enriches the educational path but fundamentally transforms the perspective of learning itself. Through the exploration of the bounds of imagination and creativity, students refine their linguistic skills crafting knowledge through action: e*do*cation.

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