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Translingual Personal Narrative Writing for CÉGEP EAL Instruction: An Action-Research Pilot Study

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Abstract

This article presents an action-research investigation of a personal narrative writing unit that I developed and taught through a translingual approach in my CÉGEP-level EAL classroom. I provide an outline of the unit for instructors. The goal of sharing my action-research study is to contribute to a growing body of linguistically inclusive pedagogical resources and to evaluate the affordances of personal narrative writing for creating an inclusive language classroom. Findings from my study suggest that personal narrative writing provided a novel and challenging English learning experience for the multilingual students. Students showed pride in their writing as well as a detailed awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, which suggests that students were able to strengthen their linguistic confidence. Further research is needed to determine if such instruction encourages students to question language hierarchies, to feel more comfortable with linguistic diversity, and/or to develop confidence in their multilingual identities and skills.

Teachers are beginning to challenge deficit-oriented and monolingual approaches to English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching as they seek out and create culturally and linguistically inclusive pedagogies (Payant & Galante, 2022). However, teachers often feel unprepared to

teach in a way that resists prevailing monolingual ideologies due to a lack of training and materials (dela Cruz, this issue). This article presents an action-research investigation of a personal narrative writing unit that I developed and taught through a translingual approach in my CÉGEP¹ level EAL classroom. I have provided an outline of the unit in Appendix 3. The goal of sharing my action-research study is to contribute to a growing body of plurilingual and translanguaging inspired pedagogical resources (Horner & Tetreault, 2017; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020) and to evaluate the affordances of personal narrative writing for creating a culturally and linguistically inclusive language classroom. Personal narrative writing is a genre of writing that invites students to author stories based on their own memories and experiences (Kittle, 2008). Creative and personal writing offers an ideal space for the development of authorial voice, an element of writing which researchers have suggested improves a writer's sense of agency over how they are represented in the narrative (see, for example, Canagarajah, 2015) and over the use of the language itself (Hanauer, 2015). Combined with a translingual approach that emphasizes meaning making over accuracy and "sees difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening" (Horner et al., 2011, p. 304), personal narrative writing may be a classroom methodology that can facilitate the creation of a translanguaging space (Garcia & Li Wei, 2014), and provide one more resource for inclusive pedagogies that reflect the multilingual turn (May, 2014) in EAL contexts. The exploratory action-research study presented here examines student reactions to a personal narrative writing unit taught through a translingual approach in an advanced-level CÉGEP EAL classroom in Montréal, Québec to assess the affordances of personal narrative to place value on linguistic and cultural diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently, EAL teachers have been combining personal and creative writing genres with a plurilingual or translingual approach to EAL instruction for the purposes of validating the linguistic and cultural

¹ CÉGEPs, or *Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel*, are institutions unique to Québec. In Québec, high school ends at grade 11, and then students may attend either a technical program or pre-university program at a CÉGEP.

diversity of students and resisting monolingual norms to create a more inclusive classroom space. For example, Seltzer (2020) collaborated with a high school teacher to develop a spoken word poetry unit taught from a translanguaging stance. Seltzer then used a raciolinguistic lens to analyze the ways students resisted racialization in their translingual poetry. Prada (2022) used digital storytelling in a university level Spanish class to draw on students' lived experiences and create translanguaging spaces that valorized racialized and minoritized identities and stories. Burton and Van Viegen (2021) describe a spoken word poetry unit in a high-school classroom in which refugee youth were encouraged to reflect upon and experiment with language mixing. They write that the spoken word poetry unit "integrated multilinguistic and multivoiced practices in the classroom" and gave students an opportunity "to speak back to institutional structures that tend to reify and reproduce linguistic hierarchies and patterns of marginalization, inviting moments for reorientation of the 'White listening subject'" (Burton & Van Viegen, 2021, p. 82). See Burton (this issue) for a detailed description of spoken word poetry and identity text activities.

In another example, Kim and Park (2020) use a meaningful literacy framework to write translingual poetry in Korean and English. A meaningful literacy framework was first proposed by Hanauer (2012) in his description of how poetry writing in a foreign language classroom can humanize and contextualize language learning. Meaningful literacy instruction centers the experiences and choices of the language learner and frames language learning as an embodied, personal, and socially and historically contextualized process. While focusing on *sijo*, a Korean poetic form, Kim and Park (2020) state that they chose a meaningful literacy framework because its emphasis on writing genres that evoke emotion, such as autobiographical or reflective writing, is essential for helping writers theorize their own fluid identity negotiation. This deliberate pedagogical strategy, when paired with a translingual approach, facilitates understanding identity negotiation of the writer across languages and cultures.

These studies suggest that teachers can use personal, reflective, and creative writing to create a translanguaging space in a language learning setting. Teaching and learning language through a meaningful literacy and translingual approach may contribute to strengthening student voices and enabling students to resist monolingual ideologies. In this action-research pilot-study, I examine student responses to my own attempt to

develop and teach a personal narrative writing unit from a translingual approach. I explore the following research question:

- (a) Is there any evidence that translingual personal narrative writing supports students' confidence in their multilingual abilities and identity?
- (b) If so, what elements of the personal narrative writing unit helped students to develop this confidence?

METHODOLOGY

Study and Unit Design

The personal narrative writing unit that students participated in for this study was six weeks long, inspired by a unit described in Kittle (2008). I had previously taught this unit with multiple groups of intermediate-advanced and advanced EAL CÉGEP students between 2016 and 2019, and once with several groups of grades 7 and 10 anglophone high school students in the winter term of 2012. My CÉGEP students had reacted very positively to the challenge and freedom offered through the personal narrative writing unit (Passi et al., 2018). By the fall of 2019, the time during which I conducted this study, I had learned about translanguaging as a political stance meant to challenge monolingual norms. In the context of teaching EAL in Québec, where French is the dominant language, I wondered if a translingual approach to teaching writing could empower students to appropriate English for their own purposes as well as become more confident in their bi- and multilingualism.

The self-reflective cycles I had been going through – planning a change in the personal narrative unit, acting on and collecting student responses to the changes, reflecting on the outcomes of the changes I had made, and then adjusting the unit further – can be understood as action research (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). My position as a PhD student in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University gave me access to resources and training to formalize the reflective cycles I was moving through as action research. Bradbury, Lewis and Embury (2019) define action research as “a process of interrupting habitual practice by exploring and inspiring innovative alternatives with others most impacted by the choices being made and actions being taken” (Bradbury et al., 2019, p. 9). The pilot-study presented here represents an interruption of monolingual teaching norms with a personal narrative writing unit that gives students the opportunity to craft a personally meaningful text in multiple languages. In the hopes of providing a more inclusive and

engaging learning experience for my students, I placed instructional emphasis on meaning making rather than on achieving grammatical correctness.

Each week I introduced students to different writing techniques (see Appendix C) and we read and analyzed personal narratives: one employed French language dialogue in an otherwise English text; four were written by my previous EAL students; three were written by Kittle's (2008) anglophone high school students. Each class was two hours and forty minutes long with a ten-to-fifteen-minute break halfway through, and we met once per week. We often had access to a computer lab for the last forty minutes of the course, during which time students could write using the desktop computers in the lab. I encouraged students to experiment with language mixing while writing drafts and in their final submissions. I also reminded students to focus on meaning; only a small portion of their grade was allotted to grammatical correctness. At the end of the unit, students submitted one personal narrative based on previous drafts and completed a writing reflection and self-evaluation. Reflection questions 1 and 3 (see Appendix A) and comments from the self-evaluation grid were selected as the data for this pilot study. The reflection questions asked students to reflect on their writing process and identify areas of growth. The self-evaluation asked students to identify what they did well in their writing. The reflections were not evaluated, and I encouraged students to answer honestly and explained that I would use their feedback to improve the unit in the future.

It is important to note that the materials used for analysis are authentic classroom materials that reflect my teaching at that point in time (the fall semester of 2019). So, although at the time of this study I attempted to teach the unit from a translingual approach by encouraging students to write in multiple languages and focus on meaning rather than form, I had not yet updated the reflection questions to directly ask students about translanguaging.

To avoid a conflict of interest, I contacted students after the course had ended to confirm participation. To protect student identities, I have given each student participant a number, 1 through 12. I recognize that the use of numbers flattens the students' identities; however, I wanted to ensure a gender-neutral approach to referring to each participant to protect their anonymity.

Participants

The CÉGEP I work at is in downtown Montréal, Québec, a lively and diverse area with a mix of housing, businesses, and public spaces. I invited students from two of my advanced, pre-university English courses to participate in the pilot study. Thirteen students consented to sharing their personal narratives, writing reflections and self-evaluations for the purposes of the study, of which I had the reflections and self-evaluations for twelve students.

After high school in Québec, students may enroll in a technical or pre-university program at a CÉGEP. Most CÉGEPs are Francophone institutions and the programs are taught in French. Students in all programs must take two mandatory English classes, one general (A-block) and one aimed at developing program-specific English vocabulary and expressions (B-block). The CÉGEP administers a standardized evaluation of English ability and places students in a course level (beginner through advanced) based on their scores. Bilingual students are placed in the advanced level class, although in my experience, students do not always self-identify as bilingual. The students who participated in the study presented here were in my advanced level, pre-university B-block course. All participants were at least eighteen years old, though none older than twenty-five. The students in my groups were in a variety of programs, such as visual arts, social sciences, and natural sciences. Despite the mandatory nature of the English courses, students appeared to enjoy the class, completed most homework tasks, and participated fully in individual and small group activities during class time. Each group's energy was positive overall, and I enjoyed working with these students.

Data Analysis

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, I used an inductive thematic coding technique (Polio & Friedman, 2016) to develop themes related to student perceptions of their linguistic development, identity, and confidence, as well as to descriptions of instructional elements that students said facilitated learning. I used NVivo software (release 1.6.1) to code data by hand twice. I then used NVivo's query functions to perform searches for frequently repeated terms and the sentences and phrases attached to these terms. After thematic codes reached saturation, I decided to perform a poetic analysis (Saldaña, 2011) on four of the data sets (see Appendix D) to gain a more intuitive and complex perspective of thematic relationships. I wrote poetry often in my youth and often write poems with my students during class, so I felt comfortable experimenting with

this form of analysis. I wanted to preserve the integrity of each students' experience, so I felt that looking at several sets of student responses as a whole and then condensing their responses into poems could be helpful. I used a technique called found poetry to emphasize recurring or salient phrases in each data set (one per student) to create poems related to the themes I had identified through coding and to reveal connections between the themes. Finally, working the data into poems allowed me to reconnect to each student and imagine their voices in a way that coding did not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Confidence

To answer the first part of the research question, (a) Is there any evidence that translingual personal narrative writing supports students' confidence in their multilingual abilities and identity?, I looked for phrases that revealed positive feelings towards their personal narrative writing. Students 1, 2, 7 and 10 noted that they already had a positive relationship with writing before entering my class but did not mention which languages they usually used when writing. Students 2, 3 and 4 expressed surprise over how much they learned through writing personal narratives and experimenting with different writing techniques. Students 1, 7, 8 and 10 mentioned having fun while working on their personal narratives. Students 3, 4, 6 and 7 said they were proud of or liked the piece of writing they submitted.

As I analyzed student responses, conflicting themes related to confidence in language proficiency surfaced. For example, Student 12 wrote that incorporating sensory details (see Appendix C, Week 4, Writing Workshop 4 for a description) into their writing was "easy" because of the memory they chose to write about (see Appendix D, Student 12, for a poetic rendition of their reflection that highlights this juxtaposition). However, when asked to identify potential changes to the story, they wrote: "As English is not my first language, I'm limited in the use of sophisticated or aesthetic sentence structures. I'm not sure I could have done better." The student then went on, in the self-evaluation grid, to precisely identify many elements that they achieved well (strong authentic voice, fluent sentence structures, correctly used vocabulary and original phrases) as well as areas they could improve (transition phrases between the second and third scenes; varied sentence structures). There is a discrepancy between a stated lack of ability ("I'm not sure I could have

done better”) alongside unmistakable evidence that the student knew exactly what they could improve as well as what they did well.

Similarly, Student 3 wrote “I am really proud of myself and I got good feed backs on my text. It's the first time I wrote a personal story in English or even a text that long” and “If I compare this work from my other writing pieces I would give my text 95%, because I perfected my writing within 6 weeks more than I have in 7 years of taking English classes.” Yet, they also wrote, “I don’t have a good enough knowledge of English to write something distinguished.” I did not ask students to evaluate their level of English, yet Student 12 and Student 3 both characterized their command over English as limited, while simultaneously showing an impressive understanding of what they did well and displaying pride in their work and their progress. Another student, Student 6, said “I like my writing and I hope I will get better in English” but filled their self-evaluation with critiques of what they did not do well rather than what they did do well. Student 6 was also the only student to experiment with including another language in their writing (dialogue between characters was written in French), which revealed the student’s ability to effectively tap into their multilingual repertoire to create meaning.

To explain this contrast, I referred to a review of research on the increasing popularity of translingual theory in composition studies by Ferris (2014). Ferris identifies common themes across studies on translingual approaches to writing instruction, one of which is that prevailing monolingual ideologies in both society and in education lead to a devaluation of multilingual students’ complex language use, even by students’ themselves. Despite my encouragement during class time that students should not worry about English grammar or spelling and could in fact write in multiple languages, Students 12, 3, and 6 felt that they should mention their non-standard use of English as a weakness.

However, the other students were able to point out what they did well in their writing without unduly diminishing their abilities. For example, Student 5 wrote that “Authentic voice is present throughout most of the text, in a way that gives insight of the character's personality. You get to understand that they are attached to the place they are in, and they also know it well. You can also tell that the character is a bit bitter towards the beginning of the text, just with the elements given away by the authentic voice.” This student’s self-evaluation shows an elevated awareness of how to craft voice in writing and how their authorial choices impact readers. Student 4 showed a heightened awareness of their growth and wrote that they were “surprised by how different [their] writing was when compared

to [their] previous attempts in other English classes” and went on to give themselves a very good grade in the self-evaluation, describing clearly all the elements they thought they did well. All other participating students (students 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) wrote detailed comments about everything that they did well and showed awareness of both their areas of growth and their strengths, as well as what elements of instruction helped them to grow.

The students’ reflections reveal that personal narrative writing provided a novel and challenging English learning experience. Assertions of pride in their writing as well as detailed awareness of strengths and weaknesses lead me to believe that some students are appropriating the language for their own ends and developing their linguistic confidence—in English. This finding illustrates the importance of a translingual approach to writing that, by focusing on meaning making, creates a space where students can appropriate language as they see fit, in the hopes of resisting monolingual ideologies. However, there is no indication that students embraced their multilingual repertoires and skills beyond a greater sense of ability in the English language.

Elements of Instruction that Support Linguistic Confidence and Inclusivity

To answer the second part of my research question, (b) What elements of the personal narrative writing unit helped students to develop this confidence?, I was able to identify five key elements that students mentioned most frequently as helping them to develop their confidence as writers: (1) studying mentor texts (samples of personal narratives); (2) choosing topics that were personally meaningful and ‘fun’ to write about; (3) incorporating emotions and senses; (4) practicing writing techniques in low-stakes settings and having the freedom to continually revise; and (5) peer feedback workshops. These elements could be implemented into other genres of writing. Although an in-depth description and exploration of these elements is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to mention these transferrable elements since many EAL teachers do not have the freedom to teach an entire personal narrative or creative writing unit. Put differently, although the personal narrative writing unit that I taught included these elements, it may not be the personal narrative genre itself that helped to develop students’ linguistic confidence, but the inclusion of these elements.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As a pilot study, one of the main goals of this action research project was to identify affordances and limitations of my current attempt at teaching personal narrative through a translingual approach. In this section, I identify potential changes suggested by the 2019 study and discuss informal observations of changes I made to the unit in 2021 and 2022.

One clear flaw of the 2019 version of the unit is that reflection questions did not ask students specifically about translanguaging, and only one student used French as a literary device in an otherwise English text. Another is that the study design did not provide evidence that students questioned language hierarchies, felt more comfortable with linguistic diversity in society, or felt more confident in their multilingual identities, although many students expressed pride in their work. I also failed to record languages spoken by each student. Future iterations of the unit could include more examples of translingual writing and class discussions and activities around translanguaging. Reflection questions should specifically ask students about translanguaging and linguistic identity. Future action-research studies could elicit more student participation through interviews.

When I taught personal narrative again in the autumn semester of 2021, I briefly introduced students to the concept of translanguaging. Several students embraced using languages other than English (mostly French) throughout their texts, and four published their personal narratives in the first edition of a journal I helped to launch, *Koloro*, which aims to celebrate the linguistic diversity of the college community by publishing multilingual student writing (Service de l'animation culturelle, 2021). Appendix B has a link to *Koloro*, as well as to other resources for teaching personal narrative and adopting a translingual approach to EAL writing instruction. At the end of the semester, I explicitly asked students if their perceptions about themselves as bilinguals had changed and if their confidence as an English user had increased. I did not systematically collect and record responses, but some students noted that they were now more aware of how much they did not know in English and felt less confident after having taken the course. This experience reflects my findings from the 2019 pilot study and suggests further development of linguistically inclusive teaching materials, as well as research into their effectiveness and student responses to them, is needed.

Chung and Chung Arsenault (this issue) describe a linguistic portrait activity which I adapted and included in the winter 2022 version of the

personal narrative unit. I asked students to reflect on the languages they knew and how they felt about each language (see Appendix C, Week 1 for my version of Chung & Chung Arsenault's [this issue] activity). Student responses to the activity were remarkably interesting, especially regarding Québécois language and identity as well as questions about the intersections of bilingualism and Québécois identity. Linguistic portraits may be an effective way to introduce bilingual CÉGEP students to concepts of linguistic and cultural diversity and to facilitate conversation around translanguaging and linguistic identity in the classroom or during interviews.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this action-research pilot study suggest that personal narrative writing gives students good opportunities to practice their writing skills as well as to increase confidence and agency in writing in English. Although the study design did not provide insight into students' beliefs about language hierarchies or self-perceptions of their own multilingualism, expressions of enjoyment, agency and confidence in student reflections and self-evaluations suggests resistance to dominant English-only ideologies. Further studies in the Québec context might employ interviews with students to examine whether resistance to standard forms of English may extend to standard forms of French, as well as how students perceive bilingualism and linguistic diversity in Québec society. Additionally, more work needs to be done to create linguistically inclusive pedagogical materials that are accessible to teachers, along with research to understand which elements of linguistically inclusive instruction have the most positive impact on students' identities and linguistic repertoires.

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APPENDIX A

REFLECTION QUESTIONS AND SELF-EVALUATION CRITERIA – AUTUMN 2019

Writing Reflection Questions and Evaluation Grid – Adapted from Kittle (2008)

1. **Process:** Tell me about your process – how did you get from beginning to end in writing this narrative? How did you move from the single show vs. tell snapshot, to the place narrative, the “moment that changed my life” narrative, and then your final personal narrative? What helped the most? What was the biggest challenge?
2. **Strengths - Annotate your own text:** Underline or highlight 5-8 qualities of writing in your final personal narrative, (vivid detail, sensory detail, authentic voice, sentence structure, metaphor, precise vocab, etc.) and explain the effect they may have on the reader (write comments in the margins).
3. **Areas of growth:** Where does this narrative still fall short? If you had months ahead of you to work on the essay, what would you change or work on first?
4. **Self-evaluation:** Grade your personal narrative and explain your evaluation. Use the *Personal Narrative Qualities* below and address each of these qualities (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence style and conventions) in your evaluation.

Personal Narrative Evaluation Grid (2 points per quality):	
<p>Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writing is clear and focused ● The reader knows what is important and why ● The story is rich in sensory detail 	/6
<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a strong lead moves the story forward ● the scenes are arranged in a logical order and work together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● use of transitional phrases that are natural and help scenes connect ● the reader can see the change in age or place soon in a new scene ● the piece ‘earns its ending’ and the ending pulls the scenes together 	/10
<p>Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the voice is authentic ● a confident, efficient voice holds the reader’s attention 	/4
<p>Word Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● original, ear-catching phrases ● strong verbs, clear nouns, and fewer adverbs and adjectives ● meaning is illuminated by vivid, precise words ● English vocabulary is used correctly 	/8
<p>Sentence Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● smooth, fluent sentence structure works to tell the piece well ● writer has paid attention to repeating structures and altered them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● varied sentence lengths and beginnings of sentences 	/6
<p>Conventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● punctuation (of dialogue, colons, semicolons, and possessive nouns) is perfect ● spelling is perfect 	/6

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grammatical errors are limited • ...except where intentional risks are being taken 😊 	
Comments:	
Total	/40

APPENDIX B

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING TRANSLINGUAL, PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND CREATIVE WRITING

1. *Koloro: Moments de Being* https://www.cvm.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Koloro_1.pdf
 - A published collection of my students' personal narratives (Fall 2021).
2. *Write Beside Them: Risk, Voice and Clarity in High School Writing* by Penny Kittle
 - Excellent description of how to craft a personal narrative (or other) writing units with tips on how to create a classroom of writers.
3. *Living Voices: Multicultural Poetry in the Middle School Classroom* by Jaime R. Wood
 - Beautiful poetry paired with mini lessons. Easy to use, and works very well with CÉGEP students, too.
4. *Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-Racist Practice* by Suhanthie Motha
 - Reflections on teaching English in our modern world.
5. *Let's not forget that translanguaging is a political act* blog post by Nelson Flores

<https://educationallinguist.wordpress.com/2014/07/19/lets-not-forget-that-translanguaging-is-a-political-act/>
 - Explanation of translanguaging and why it is important.

6. *Introduction to Translingual Writing* by OWL Purdue.
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/teacher_and_tutor_resources/translingual_writing/
 - Ideas for using translanguaging in your own classroom, as well as suggested readings.
7. See also the references section of this article and the other articles in this special issue.

APPENDIX C

WINTER 2022 PERSONAL NARRATIVE WRITING PROJECT MATERIALS

Adapted from Kittle (2008) and Wood (2006). Teachers may adapt these materials; please reference this article when using and adapting these materials.

Week 1: Introduction

In this project, we will explore theories of language and bilingualism, and experiment with using our own multilingualism to craft polyvocal or translingual texts based on our own lived experiences. The result will be a non-fiction short story. I will ask you to experiment with multiple writing strategies and forms, but the purpose of this project is help you develop confidence and proficiency languaging as a multilingual person.

Language Identity

Think about the various languages you know. Draw an outline of a person. Colour or label the “person” to show when and where and why you use different languages.

What is Translingual Writing?

Visit:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/teacher_and_tutor_resources/translingual_writing/index.html

Visit: <https://educationallinguist.wordpress.com/2014/07/19/lets-not-forget-that-translanguaging-is-a-political-act/>

What does translanguaging mean to me?

What is a personal narrative?

Writing Workshop 1: Show vs. Tell

Step 1: Think about something you did yesterday or last week or last month. Write about it briefly in 1-2 sentences using the past tense.

Step 2: Pick just one moment from what happened, perhaps this moment only spans a few seconds or a few minutes. Rewrite it in first person, present tense. Focus on describing physical details and sensory details.

Homework Due Week 2

Finish reading the sample personal narrative and do a quick analysis.

Label and briefly explain 2 examples each of:

1. Sentence Structure: How does the author play with punctuation, sentence length, clause order, etc. to convey meaning & create effects?
2. Vivid Imagery: Find examples of "word paintings". The author uses words to create vivid images or sensations in your mind.
3. Authentic voice: Where can you feel the author's personality?
4. Translanguaging: How does the author employ language mixing? What effects does it create?

Week 2: Writing Workshop 2 – Place Narrative

1. Think of place that is important to you. Write down that place.
2. Spend some time drawing the place – drawing is one way to help you remember details and access memories.

3. Choose either one specific memory, or three, and begin writing your own story in three scenes, modelled the sample personal narratives.
4. Hand in your draft at the end of class.

Homework Due Week 3

1. Read and analyze your assigned short story.
2. Underline or highlight parts of the text that represent qualities of a good narrative, for example: intense emotion, sensory details, vivid images, authentic voice, varied sentence structures, dialogue, accuracy/realism, sequence of scenes, timing/pace, capturing the reader's attention, etc. plus anything else you notice!
 - a. Be sure to write short explanations of what you notice in the margins.
 - b. Underline/highlight and explain approximately 8 items – don't spend more than one hour on this activity.
3. Finish your place narrative draft. Print two copies and bring it to class.

Week 3: Story Analysis & Writing Workshop 3

Short story analysis:

Expert group: Sit with the other students who analyzed the same story as you. Compare your notes and complete the analysis worksheet.

Jigsaw group: Sit with a group of students who all read different stories.

Take turns explaining the analysis of the story that you read.

With your Jigsaw group, create a synthesis of "Narrative Qualities" - what are some qualities of narrative writing that are common across all four stories?

Share your observations with the whole class.

Writing Workshop 3: A Moment that Changed My Life

1. Start by listing important moments from your life; these can be moments when you learned something about yourself, learned a life lesson, grew up, etc.... (Set a timer for 5 minutes, write without stopping for the whole time.)
2. Select the moment that seems most interesting and that you feel comfortable exploring.
3. Start listing details and describing the scenes (sensory details) related to the moment.

4. When you are ready, start writing the story. Set a timer for 30 minutes – don't worry too much about spelling and grammar. Remember to use:

- a. First person, present tense: I am writing this now; I can smell...
- b. Sensory details: touch, smell, sight, taste, sounds
- c. Dialogue, thoughts, feelings

Once the 30 minutes are up, take some time (10-30 minutes) to revise and edit your writing. Revise = move OR cut OR insert scenes and paragraphs; edit = look at spelling, grammar, word choice, punctuation, etc.

Make sure you print your draft x2 and bring it to class next week.

**You may complete this writing workshop as homework.

Week 4: Writing Workshop 4 & Peer Feedback Workshop

Writing Workshop 4: Using Poetry to Learn Four Writing Techniques

1. Sensory Imagery – appeal to the five senses

Take a candy or other food and explore it using your five senses, writing down notes about what you think of, remember, or notice as you go

sound

smell

sight

touch

taste

Take a few minutes to draft a sensory poem using your observations!

2. Simile – make a comparison using like or as to create more interesting, specific, and detailed sentences.

Take a look at your 'sensory poem' – can you expand on any of your observations by using a simile?

Examples: the wrapper crinkles like a gift I can't wait to unwrap; it is as sticky as tree sap; etc.

Read Nikki Giovanni's poem *You Were Gone* to see how similes can be used to create powerful meaning.

You can also read *At Blackwater Pond* by Mary Oliver for sensory imagery and a great simile.

3. Precise language – vivid precise words, ear-catching phrases, strong verbs, and nouns

Read the poem *Early in the Morning* by Li-Young Lee

This poem by Li-Young Lee gives us a good example of precise language use (strong nouns and verbs; ear-catching vocab). What synonyms does he use for the words *rice*, *boiling*, *fire*, *morning*, *combs* (verb), *thick*, *sound*, *fifty*, and *hair*? Notice how more precise and vivid words reveal deeper meaning, or even layers of meaning.

Return to your sensory poem, and replace 1 or 2 words with a more precise word choice.

4. Metaphor – compare two objects to one another to create meaning

Metaphors are like similes, but do not use *like* or *as*.

Objects can have literal and figurative/metaphorical meanings.

Take a look at some of the objects you have in your bag, and try to compare two objects to one another, or use metaphors to describe why one of those objects is important to you.

Read *The Gift* by Li-Young Lee – notice the metaphors he uses to describe the splinter, his father’s voice, and his father’s hands; what kinds of information do the metaphors give us about how Lee feels? About his relationship with his father? About his age and personality?

Class 4 Peer Feedback Workshop

Share copies of your “moment that changed my life” narrative with your small group (see week 5 notes for guidelines on peer review).

Week 5: Peer Feedback Workshop

Revision means looking at the text as a whole – NOT nit-picking grammar and spelling. Spend as much time as possible on REVISION with your team. Leave the editing (spelling and grammar) for last.

Step 1: Give one copy of your story to the teammate on your left. They will be your first reader.

Step 2: Read the story you have received, and notice (in pencil) which parts are really excellent, and which parts need work. Think about what could be moved, removed (deleted) - maybe what is missing and needs to be written. Write questions. Make positive comments! Use the editing checklist “Narrative Qualities” to help you give more detailed feedback.

Step 3: As a whole group, look at one story at a time (at this point, give the other copy of your story to the teammate who hasn't read it yet. They will quickly skim through it now). Take time to talk through the piece, ask the author questions to help get to the heart of their writing. Set a timer for 7-10 minutes to discuss each draft.

- What is your favourite part of the piece so far?
- What part are you unsure about? How might you change it?
- What did you mean by this?
- Why is this important to you?
- What are you trying to say?
- What were you thinking at that time? How were you feeling?
- Why did you structure your story this way?
- Point out areas where more detail or context is needed, OR, where some details could be condensed or cut.

**N.B.: The author can also take this time to ask their teammates questions, especially if there is a specific part of the story that you want help with.

Step 4: Take the feedback from your peers and have fun revising in the lab! DON'T be afraid to cut parts that you can't use now! You can always keep those paragraphs in your writing portfolio and work with them in the future.

Week 6: Reflection and Self Evaluation for Personal Narrative

See Appendix A.

Instructions for Final Personal Narrative

Final Personal Narrative – Due Week 5 for peer feedback workshop:
BRING 2 PRINTED COPIES TO CLASS!

Writing your Narrative:

You will write your final personal narrative around the theme of your choice.

Example: A place, an important moment, an important person, a topic you are passionate about (tolerance, racism, sexism, freedom, immigration, work, spirituality, family, etc.).

You can choose to expand on some of the in-class writing we have done (show vs. tell; place narrative; a moment that changed my life; sensory poem) OR you may start a new text.

Note: This is not fiction; it should recount facts from your own life. Make sure you write about something that you feel comfortable sharing with me and with two other classmates.

Your narrative will be a collection of scenes (approximately 2-3) that explore the theme you have chosen (place, life changing moment, special person, etc.)

Read the sample texts on our course website for ideas on structure and scene writing. Refer to class notes.

Refer to "Writing Narrative Qualities" to make sure you have included all necessary elements in your final text.

Follow the steps below to help you as you write. Feel free to jump over some steps if you have already completed them.

Step 1 AND 7: narrow your thesis/argument/'so what': Read your drafts from in class or your brainstorming: What themes or messages appear? What do I want to explore? NB: You may change or discover your thesis, your "what is important & why" as you write.

Step 2: List moments, memories that reflect that theme.

Step 3: Select 3-5 moments that can “hang together” to illustrate your theme. Try storyboarding (drawing a cartoon) or outlining to start thinking of a structure.

Step 4: Write the scenes from the moments: Focus on going deep, “showing” rather than “telling” about the experience.

Step 5: Arrange your scenes – think about how to engage the audience with your introduction, how to connect the scenes together, and how to wrap the narration up at the end.

Step 6: Edit and revise, looking for ways to connect the scenes, to write beautiful sentences, to use dialogue, to express your authentic voice, to grab the reader with vivid imagery, etc. Refer to the Writing Narrative Qualities, as well as your notes from analyzing various narratives in-class to help you think about how to improve your own writing. Continue until you have crafted a piece that you are happy with, that is rich in both content (your “what is important and why”) and craft (structure, sentences, etc.). Check spelling and grammar (ask for help).

APPENDIX D

POETIC ANALYSES: FOUND POETRY CREATED FROM SELECTED STUDENTS’ REFLECTIONS

Student 12

I drew my attic and remembered
...Her...

The first time she came over

Great memories

Good emotions

I chose, I decided

It was easy to write

My voice is very authentic

Reflective memo: Sweet memories of first love, this student chose to capture that moment and they feel it made writing easier, and made their voice authentic and natural.

English is not my first language
I'm limited in the use of sophisticated sentences
I'm not sure I could have done better
But
I could improve
I could have added
I could have use
I did the best I could

Reflective memo: Here, the student feels their lack of English is detrimental to their ability to write in a sophisticated way. But at the same time, they are aware of specific elements they could work on and asserts that they did the best they could.

Student 11

All these exercises
gradually work on
more and more vivid imagery
I'd like to add even more
adds a lot of quality to a narrative.
Feedback from my classmates
enriched my text a lot! They had
a bunch of ideas!
challenging
to find how to write it, though.
I could also work on:
transitions
epic detail
making my voice even more unique
more precise vocabulary.

Reflective memo: This student notes that the activities helped them to gradually work on including vivid imagery in their writing. They mention vivid imagery several times – for them, it “adds a lot of quality to a narrative”! It seems like it is a tool they really enjoyed learning and using. They also note that talking to peers gave them more ideas. This student seems confident, while also reflecting on specific elements they could improve.

Student 10

I have to admit
I truly enjoy writing.
From the first narrative to the final one,
I had a blast expressing myself and writing
moments I cherish.
An evolution in my scripts is visible, though:
I learned to integrate sensitive details, what I
hear,
see,
touch
and smell,
but also to write as if I was trying to
tell a story, not a homework.
What helped me the most was definitely the examples
because since I am a visual learner,
seeing, reading what my narrative is supposed to look like
helped me immensely.
As if the reader was there with me
easy for the reader to see
as if I was telling a story around a fire and the listener
was hanging to what I would say, word for word
because even if my story
isn't quite focused on one thing,
I now see how it could have added a lot and
I know what is important to explain in a story.
I believe this vocabulary is used correctly.
The sentences are smooth, I alternate between short, longer ones to make
my story more interesting to read.
My sentences are written correctly and
last time I checked I didn't have a lot (maybe none?)
grammatical errors.

Reflective memo: This student came in as a confident writer and had a lot of fun writing about moments that they “cherished”. However, also notes that they did learn from this project, specifically reflecting on how they could make their writing more focused and structured. They seemed really focused on making sure the reader could understand and be with the author in the writing.

Student 9

I didn't know where I was going.

I didn't know what I wanted to talk about

Then, I decided to continue from the texts we did in class because I liked what I did.

I decided to change it because I thought it was too personal.

I didn't like what I wrote,

I decided to split my first scene in two

When I wrote I used the examples as reference.

I observed how the author explained a place or how they made us feel their emotions.

Usually when I write, I don't describe much.

As I was writing, I often had to stop myself and look for details I could add so my writing was richer.

Reflective memo: This student explains their process as a struggle, filled with ups and downs: Connected to their writing, focussed on what they like, to craft something they liked and wanted to share. They observed how other authors made readers feel emotions. They note what they usually do when they write, and note that they had to stop and “look for details” to make their writing “richer”