* 1. **Creative Writing**

People are naturally attracted to what interests them; thus, students will always want to explore personal interests. This is what is considered as the foundation of creative writing.(Bekurs & Santoli, 2004). Following first language (L1) composition theorists such as Murray (1985) (in Hyland, 2003) and Elbow (1998), teachers of writing see their classroom goals as “fostering [second language (L2)] students' expressive abilities”, by encouraging and helping them find “their own voices to produce writing that is fresh and spontaneous”(Hyland, 2003). This means that L2 writing teachers encourage their students' personal experiences and opinions through self-expression.

Likewise, Macrorie (1980), a writing process theorist, argues that writing activities have to “stem from students' interest so that education can take advantage of a natural need-to-know inclination in the human heart” (in Bekurs & Santoli, 2004). So, according to him and other expressivists, writing is seen as a “creative act of self-discovery” (Hyland, 2003) that “helps generate self-awareness of the writer's social position and literate possibilities” (Fryer, 1974; in Hyland, 2003). It also facilitates “clear thinking, effective relating and satisfying self-expression” (Moffet, 1982, p.235; in Hyland, 2003).

Furthermore, writing helps the writer/ student to share his/ her personal meanings with others. In classroom contexts, the writing courses “emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on a topic”; the teacher's role consists of providing the students with the “space to make their own meanings with a positive and cooperative environment” (Hyland, 2003). Because writing is a creative process, students need to begin this process by exploratory writing (Bekurs & Santoli, 2004); and once the latter is mastered, it is “a powerful tool for focusing on a problem and stimulating thought” (Bean, 1998, p.98). In other terms, instead of imposing their thoughts and opinions, offering models, or suggesting responses for their students, teachers try to “stimulate” the writer/ student's “ideas through pre-writing tasks, such as journal writing and parallel texts”. This is what makes writing a “developmental process”, “an act of discovering meaning” (Hyland, 2003).

* + 1. **An Introduction to Creative Writing**
    2. **Definition**

There is no exact definition of creative writing. Yet, many writers agree that it includes two types: creative non-fiction and creative fiction writing, and each of these types embrace various genres. The following is a definition found in Wikipedia; yet, other definitions may be found in other sources.

“Creative writing is considered to be any writing, fiction, poetry, or non-fiction that goes outside the bounds of normal professional, journalistic, academic, and technical forms of literature. Works which fall into this category include novels, epics, short stories, and poems. Writing for the screen and stage, screenwriting and playwriting respectively, typically have their own programs of study, but fit under the creative writing category as well.”

There is a great controversy on whether ‘creative writing' is an art or a craft, and the debate will never come to an end. However, many writers agree that creative writing is both an art and a craft. Therefore, it is “something special of an art and a craft”. Many people believe that (creative) writers have a gift in the sense that they have the “power to entertain...to make someone laugh, to make someone cry...and to make someone think”. On the other hand, many writers and specialists (mainly in the field of psychology) believe that “all people have the potential to be creative” (Colton & Bergman, 1999), which means that creativity can be developed through practice, especially through writing.

* + 1. **Characteristics of Creative Writing**
       1. **Originality**

In trying to define ‘originality', a dramatist compared it to an “aroma”, and that it is “unique”. Thus, he stated:

“Originality is something we cannot profane with a definition. You simply feel it. It is something like an aroma. You can't touch it with your fingertips. Perhaps ‘unique' is the word... A spark out of the author's genius might light up a piece of writing so that it'll dazzle you with its brilliance” (quoted in Egri, 1965, 1993, p.14-15).

In analysing this quotation, Egri (1965, 1993) feels that the dramatist' is not so clear in comparing originality to an ‘aroma'; he rather prefers to compare it to “genius” and adds that it “must be rare” (p.14); this implies that only a very small proportion of writers can have the quality of being original.

Egri (1965, 1993) suggests that the best way to define originality is by taking a masterpiece, be it a play, novel or short story, and try to find “that giant of literature” that “carries its originality”. Hence, what makes works like: “War and Peace”, by Tolstoy, and “The Diamond Necklace”, by de Maupassant, so enduring is that each one of these masterpieces is “outstanding for its character portrayals” and that with “a few bold strokes or with detailed drawing”, the authors made them come to life (p.15).

But, as Wellek and Warren (1942.1947.1949.1956) claimed, many works of early ages, such the Elizabethan sonnets, were conventional to previous works of the age, because the authors of these works tried to use, adapt and even modify themes and images inherited from tradition without having felt inferior or unoriginal; so does this mean that their works were of no artistic value?

Wellek and Warren (1942.1947.1949.1956) believe that this is not a form of plagiarism, and Samual Johnson (1759) shared the same point of view, by claiming that: “[Since] not every instance of similitude can be considered as a proof of imitation, so not every imitation ought to be stigmatised as plagiarism. The adoption of a noble sentiment, or the insertion of a borrowed ornament, may sometimes display so much judgment as will almost compensate for invention...”

So, if a writer quotes, borrows, or even imitates other works, this would not mean that his/ her work lacks sincerity or originality; it will always carry an artistic value. Furthermore, originality in writing is related to the personality of the writer, and the authenticity of his/ her piece. Thus, any writing that is true to a writer's personality, authentic and original may well be found in a good poem; it is something that only he or she could have produced.

Authenticity, here, refers to that individual voice, which genuine artists find as they seek to represent what is increasingly important to them. Originality, however, “does not mean novelty which is easily achieved”, as Fairfax & Moat (1989, 1998) define it, rather it has to do with “the means by which experience is presented in a more distinctive and significant manner”. Moreover, originality “refers to behaviour that occurs relatively infrequently, is uncommon under given conditions, and is relevant to those conditions” (Maltzman, 1960).

Thus, personality, authenticity and originality are, linked, and achieved only by continual effort. Thus, writers with original personalities tend to be:

* Indifferent to conventional procedures and behaviour,
* Inner-directed, making and following their own goals, and
* Keenly interested in contradictions and challenges.

Creativity and originality differ markedly between the arts and sciences, and even between different art forms, though many personality tendencies can be shared between scientists and artists (Perry, 1999). Creativity, however, is different from originality in that the former refers to the “consequences” of originality (Maltzman, 1960).

* + - 1. **Flexibility**

Flexibility in writing can well be observed in the student's writing process. Sometimes he/ she may need to write thirty (30) drafts and other times a single draft will do. Sometimes, he/ she thinks that he/ she should dictate his/ her ideas, write them on the computer, or thinks that he/ she has to scratch them out carefully with a pencil.

So, instead of expecting him/ herself to write perfect first drafts or to develop his/ her best ideas before writing, a student writer needs to learn to trust the generative nature of composing (Leki, 1998). By being flexible and open-minded, he/ she will sometimes discover his/ her most innovative ideas in progress, because language generates thought. In fact, what the student learns as he/ she writes will sometimes contradict his/ her preliminary hunches; so, he/ she has to be prepared to revise accordingly.

In addition to this, a student needs to be flexible about how he/ she composes documents. He/ she needs to be aware that some documents will be more demanding than others. For example, a semester-long research paper would require a different amount of collaboration, research, and revision than a short biography. So, flexibility is the “key to disciplined writing” as Vishwanathan (2004) pointed out . Hence, if a writer/ student manages to plan his/ her time effectively by doing some preliminary planning and prewriting, in addition to maintaining organized files by keeping a list of ideals or drafts of essays that might be worth developing and by organizing reading notes, he/ she will have less trouble in generating subjects to write about.

However, it is important for a student to be aware of the fact that trying to plan absolutely everything before writing may undermine his/ her creative potential. Thus, it is meaningless to, for instance, edit, documents (for example, checking spelling, grammar, punctuation, and style) before revising. Being flexible requires from a writer to vary strategies from project to project, and to be able to manage the amount of time (Colton & Bergmann, 1999) he/ she gives to each writing strategy, which in itself depends on the genre of the writing task, the writer's personality, schedule, and writing habits.

In order to develop his/ her flexibility in writing, a student writer needs to adopt effective writing habits; he/ she can achieve that through:

* Reading widely (Perry, 1999), because the latter gives him/ her the opportunity to research his/ her topics and seek exemplars. By finding out what others have said about his/ her subject, he/ she can analyse the research methods that the others employed in order to generate knowledge about his/ her own subject; his/ her creativity can, hence, be sparked by what he/ she reads and by engaging in discussions with others. He/ she can, also, enhance his/ her opportunities for being creative by researching the creative efforts of other people.
* Believing in his/ her voice, because when his/ her goal is to be creative, he/she needs to emphasise the positive. He/ she has to be flexible by giving his/ her creative abilities time to grow, and exercising the latter involves quieting the editorial voice, that is the voice within him/her that critiques whatever he/ she does (Bolduc, 1996).

However, being creative does not mean impairing his/ her critical faculties. Hence, inventing involves critically examining his/her work in relation to the work of others, and being receptive to critics (Bolduc, 1996). So, a writer always needs to set aside doubt, self-criticism, and despair, especially in the beginning of a writing project. And, after all, he/ she needs to emphasise the positive; that is to say, even when he/ she comes close to despairing, he/ she believes his/her rough drafts will become crystal clear. He/she believes that he/ she will identify some innovative, creative interpretation.

There are other habits that a writer must adapt in order to enhance his/ her writing flexibility and effectiveness, such as:

* Establishing a comfortable place to write;
* Writing daily;
* Managing to deal with time.
  + - 1. **Inspiration and Flow in Writing**

It is worth reporting the old saying that says that something is “one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration”, (Silvester, 2004) or as Bradley puts it: “ten percent inspiration or talent, and ninety percent hard work” (in Silvester, 2004). This is true for writing, too.

Hence, it is important to get inspiration, but it is more important to know that a writer has not to sit around and wait for it to show up. A writer must have the will to work and struggle to find the words to express his/ her own vision of the world. Hence, if he/ she does so by writing, he/ she will have a “muse whispering story ideas and perfect phrases into” his/ her “ear” as he/ she writes (Silvester, 2004).

However, and as poet Edward Hirsch claims, “The terror of writing comes from the fact that there is always something involved beyond mere willpower and conscious labor” (in Perry, p.124); that is to say, most writers, especially beginners, have the belief that inspiration is the only thing that pushes them to write, or as Stedman (1970, p.21) called “a direct endowment from heaven, - the Inspiration governing creative, impassioned, imaginative art...”.

So, it is necessary to offer a muse sustenance before one can expect it to come by itself. Thus, a writer can learn to help him/ herself get the muse by taking matters into his/ her own hands (and mind), and tries to create for him/ herself an atmosphere or put him/ herself in a situation where flow can happen (Perry, 1999). So, if a person is really meant to be a writer, he/ she has probably already got a muse hanging around, and he/ she has only got to feed it. An instance about this can be the way Ralph Angel (in Perry, 1999, p.129) tries to make writing possible, by going to his writing room, saying that he does not wait for inspiration to invite him to write. Sometimes, however, a writer may experience moments of inspiration that are fed by some craft, as Stephen Yenser explains:

I think I would say more than 85 percent [of poetry] is revision. I feel that most of writing poetry is a matter of craft. it's not an easy craft....it's like writing prose, writing fiction, writing music, like pointing paintings think all these involve a hell of a lot of work and a touch of inspiration....so craft is there inseparable from the flow. In fact I wouldn't have the flow without the craft, I think. The inspiration is different. I think anybody can be lucky enough to get hit by lightning. (in Perry, 1999, p.129).

Inspiration comes on occasions (Stedman, 1970); it works for some writers who, generally, await these moments to come, or would prefer to prepare themselves to live these moments, as is the case with Mozart (in a letter from Life of Mozart by Holmes); thus, he writes:

When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer-say travelling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them. Those ideas that please me I retain in memory, and am accustomed, as I have been told, to hum them to myself.

To develop one's inspiration, a writer may visit places and do things, but most of all, read. He/ she can read poetry and non-fiction because, as Silvester (2004) says “that is where odd ideas come from”. He/ she can, also, read fiction as he/ she can read in and outside his/ her genre. “All these things will be filtered through [the writer's] own perceptions to feed [his/ her] Muse”. Moreover, writers who exercise other kinds of art, such as painting, music and sculpture, it is pointed out that the latter are very interesting and helpful sources that might inspire them.

Inspiration requires “trivial conditions” to come, in order to feed the writer with some fresh green ideas, and an “emotional charge”, “passion” and “creative moments” for him/her to free his/her mind and put his/her ideas and thoughts down on paper (Lytton, 1971, p.20). Thus,

Pure inspiration may come anywhere, but for the elaboration of this vision, for the hard work that makes the vision tangible, and turns it into a work of art the poet or writer needs conditions that he [or she] finds conductive to concentration. Rilke, for instance, needed the quiet and isolation of country mansions. Other writers required various more mundane paraphernalia to jog along the tired muse....The requirements are as multifarious, odd and unpredictable as the writers. (Lytton, 1971, pp. 20-21).

* + - 1. **Imagination**

The term ‘imagination' embraces different meanings; it can be better defined with relation to the creative process. According to Lytton (1971), (artistic) imagination means that something is “done inventively” and this implies that imagination is associated with creativity, meaning that the former is a “creative faculty” (p.5).

Likewise, Stedman (1970), defining artistic imagination, says more explicitly that it is:“a faculty of conceiving things according to their actualities or possibilities,-that is, as they are or may be; of conceiving them clearly; of seeing with the eyes closed, and hearing with the ears sealed, and vividly feeling, things which exist only through the will of the artist's genius. Not only of conceiving these, but of holding one's conceptions so well in mind as to express them,- to copy them,-in actual language or form.” (p.231-32).

Stedman, here, relates artistic imagination to the human senses as they conceive things, and how the artist genuinely, using these senses, brings things into existence, by means of actual language or form. He adds that every work of art is worthy of consideration only if it is “more or less effective through beauty, feeling and imagination” (p.147).

However, imagination does not necessarily mean that one imagines only things that are unreal, or that he/ she has never seen before, because these things are often related to reality; the idea is that imagination has the implication that one goes “beyond the given data”, that is “going beyond the immediately obvious facts and seeing the hidden structure” (Lytton, 1971, p.5). Hence, if a person tries to order elements where he/ she sees relationships that were not evident before, his/ her work will be considered an effective one.

In writing, imagination is sovereign, in that every piece of writing should be seen as a product of the latter (Stedman, 1970).

Everyone can possess the power of imagination (Stedman, 1970), which is one of the most valuable gifts a human being can have. It allows people to create, to experience the joy and satisfaction of invention (Hewitt, 2003) to predict and hypothesize, and to empathize with others. Hence, when a person reads a novel and believes in the characters in that novel, it is because the writer has imagined the story into existence in a way that allows the reader to do the same. So, by using language for creative writing, a student/ writer makes a representational world for him/ herself and his/ her readers (Caseburg, 2003). He/ she learns to understand the ability of language to stand for experience, to endure limitations, and to reshape familiar forms and elements into new relationships (Amberg & Larson, 1992).

Therefore, Amberg and Larson (1992) suggest that student writers must be encouraged to see that their own unique imaginations are valuable sources for ideas. Imagination can, hence, lead them in any direction, from fantasy to science fiction to well-imagined realism. The imagination is the writer's means of bringing an idea to life through the various writing genres.

* + - 1. **Motivation**

Being motivated is one of the key requirements for effective writing and success in it. While at times, a student writer might not feel like writing, he/she can identify and focus on the forces that are driving his/her desire to write; he/she will be well along the path to being motivated (Colton & Bergmann, 1999). In the classroom, however, it is required from the part of the teacher to bring some energy and excitement to the process of writing in the classroom (Kroll, 1990), that is, to create a writing environment which is authentic, and purposeful. This can be achieved by encouraging communication in a writing classroom. In respect of this we can identify four forms of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic, positive, and negative. Various combinations of these can be brought together to help a student writer write effectively. Perry (1999) argues that the most successful form of motivation is both positive and intrinsic.

Hence, by intrinsic motivation, we mean the desire which can arise from within a student/writer to write, and to achieve better in writing (Perry, 1999). Extrinsic motivation refers to the desire which is driven by external forces (Perry, 1999), such as teacher feedback, and competition, in the classroom. Moreover, adopting a positive attitude towards the writing task will help motivate the student writer, and enhancing it is a matter of identifying those motivating forces that he/she enjoys and likes (Colton & Bergmann, 1999). Sometimes, a fear of failure or other negative consequences can motivate a student/writer to write, as well; these are stress-producing forces and should be minimized in favour of a positive attitude, that is, by focusing, instead, on the positive, internal and external forces.

In order to develop a student's motivation to write, there are strategies which the latter should follow. These include:

* Recognising that the ‘force' is within him/her and that the most effective motivating forces are both intrinsic and positive.
* onstructing a written list of all the positive, internal and external forces that will motivate him/her to write.
* Identifying his/her personal, long, medium and short-term goals.
* Looking at his/her writing environment, and trying to change any environmental influences that are likely to hinder his/her will to write.
* Developing a realistic writing timetable and strictly adhere to it.
* Setting goals for each writing genre, or assignment, and for each writing session.
* Reading more to inspire his/her writing and to get motivated to write (adapted from Colton & Bergmann, 1999).

So, it is important to create a strong, engaging context, which will generate the motivation for students to write. In this way, teaching writing is very similar to teaching a grammar point or any new language. So, if a teacher can create an engaging context for student writing, their writing will naturally become more communicative. The result of this desire to communicate is that students will want to be more accurate in their writing, and most of all, they will want to write, by acquiring good writing habits.

* + - 1. **The Importance of Reading for Writers**

Many writers argue that reading is one of the best sources of inspiration in their writings (Kroll, 1990; Perry, 1999); this is what Ethan Canin had as an experience:

The only inspiration there is, as far as I'm concerned, is reading...The only thing that inspires me, and infallibly, is reading. Which is not to say every book, because most books don't? But when you find a writer that you like...There are certain writers, when I couldn't think of what to write, I'd read a few paragraphs and there would be such an explosion of energy...that made me want to write. (in Perry, 1999, p.181).

At times, a writer may suddenly lose his/ her writing momentum, and, so, needs to “parasail” him/ herself “back into flow by reading”, be it novels, poetry or any kind of non-fiction, related either to writing in general or to the project at hand (Perry, 1999, p.181).

Reading is a “flow-enhancing relaxant” (Perry,1999,p.182) , in that it allows the writer get into his/her mood, and calmed down so that he/she feels as if he/she is “ready to get something done” (Samuel H. Pillsbury, in Perry, 1999, p.182), or again, begins the loosening-process after relaxation.

In academic writing, a writer needs reading for other purposes. The latter can be a source to help students write academic papers (Spack, 1988), or to “develop academic style and tone in their writing”, especially as far as non-native learners of a language are concerned (Kroll, 1990, p.226). Reading serves, also, as a tool for developing the linguistic competence among the writers of non-native languages, or as a source of information to be used in their own writings (Kantz, 1990).

Furthermore, it makes much more sense to be aware of what other people are doing, and for writers that means knowing what is being written (Baldwin, 1982), even if one does not have time to read everything. In this way, the writer can absorb new developments, new ideas and techniques, and eventually use them in something entirely his/ her own (Ed Orchester, in Perry, 1999, p.182). So, if he/ she writes romance, the writer should know what is going on in the romance genre, and if he/ she writes contemporary realism, he/ she should know that. On the other hand, reading within the writer's genre lets the writer know what other writers have done, and, so, he/ she can do something unique (Baldwin, 1982), or with a different slant. So reading within the writer's genre lets him/ her get to know that genre well, and it teaches him/ her how to write more effectively. What about reading outside his/ her genre?

One thing reading outside the writer's genre can do is expose him/ her to things he/ she might not encounter in his/ her genre. Literary fiction (or contemporary realism, or general fiction) often explores new ways of putting a story together, experimental forms and so on, where other genres are often more conservative. So even if the writer does not write that kind of fiction or poetry, he/ she might learn a new way to lay out a story or verse that he/ she can use in his/her own genre. So, anything that is a source of great story ideas is worth reading (Wellek & Warren, 1942, 1947, 1949, 1956).

To put it short, reading, mostly, fiction or poetry “helps focus the mind on creative, imaginary linguistic activity and away from mundane, linear thinking”. It inspires the writer's creativity, in the sense that it “makes the creation of something from nothing seem feasible all over again”, and “reminds” the writer of his/ her “power and meaningfulness of good written art”; that is to say, it makes him/ her read about the art of writing (Perry, 1999, pp.182-83).

It is, then, important that every writer understands these characteristics, previously mentioned, which make part of the type or genre he/she writes, and that he/ she has to develop his/her skills in writing by acquiring these writing qualities. That is to say, he/ she has to try to have original ideas, be flexible, has the will to write and create, and try to benefit from reading within and outside his/ her genre in order to develop and inspire his/ her writing.