

# Continuing language teacher education: L2 experienced teachers engage in the craft of creative writing

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## Abstract

Written self-expression in a foreign or second language (L2) is highly important for the 21<sup>st</sup> century yet the most difficult and underdeveloped of the four language skills. A promising direction to ensure L2 teacher motivation and writing skills is for them to experience the process of developing their own expressive writing. Experienced L2 teachers, many non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) worldwide, often lack opportunities and motivation to improve their own L2 expressive writing. This exploratory study investigated the professional development (PD) of 15 experienced L2 teachers in an M.Ed. program who engaged with unique CW craft tools in a semester workshop course. Creative writing (CW) has been shown to contribute to L2 learner language development but has been ignored as a PD tool for L2 teachers. Mixed methods, using written open and closed pre-posttest questions, written final portfolio reflections and instructor field notes, assessed teacher changes. Three major themes emerged: changes in the teacher as a writer; changes in teachers' cognition about CW; changes as L2 teachers of expressive writing. The third theme will be addressed in a different paper. Teachers underwent changes in the following areas: increased written proficiency; more effective beliefs and knowledge about CW; improved cognition, i.e., increased appreciation for the process and products of CW. Examples of course units and CW craft tools are included.

**Keywords** language teacher education, creative writing, L2 teacher professional development, EFL teachers, experienced L2 teachers, L2 writing teachers, creative writing workshops

## 1. Introduction

Written self-expression in a foreign or second language (L2) is highly important yet the most difficult and underdeveloped of the four language skills. A promising direction to ensure L2 teacher professional development is for them to experience the process of developing their own expressive writing. The global prevalence of English as an international language (Dewi, 2013) raises the need for L2 teachers who are proficient and enthusiastic, not only in listening, speaking, and reading in their target language but also in writing.

While attention has been paid to academic writing, for example in the “model of domain expertise” (Lee & Yuan, 2021), expressive creative writing (CW) has largely been neglected. Teacher preparation for L2 contexts often ignore CW, and research on L2 teacher preparation for writing has left a “surprising void on L2 writing teacher expertise” (Lee & Yuan, 2021, p.1), particularly regarding the process for developing such expertise (Alexander, 2003).

Maloney offers reasons for the preference of academic writing over creative writing:

*A combination of prejudice against non-academic forms*

*of writing, an assumption that play is inherently trivial and has no place in an academic institution and a misunderstanding of the prerequisite language skills are regularly cited as reasons for eschewing creative writing in favor of academic writing. (Maloney, 2019, p.16)*

There is a need for L2 teachers worldwide to raise their professionalism in the area of CW by engaging in writing themselves (Crandall & Early, 2023). Eighty percent of the estimated 15 million English teachers globally are Non-Native-English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) (Floris & Renandya, 2020), often with little opportunity or motivation to improve their own writing in their target language. Adding to the conundrum, even subject-matter teachers throughout the world (not limited to L2 teachers) come with negative writing histories, hold limited conceptions of what counts as writing, have low writing self-confidence and experience challenges in composing (Cremin & Oliver, 2016).

Indeed, very little attention has been paid to CW as a tool in teacher development (Maloney, 2022), with its informal style, lexis and wide range of unique forms (Disney, 2014). This neglect is unfortunate because when CW is lacking from L2 teacher development, a large portion of writing development in the L2 teacher's target language, particularly language usage and vocabulary, goes missing. This handicaps both teachers and students

since CW “has a knock-on effect on all aspects of L2 acquisition” (Maloney, 2022, p 9).

An organization that has utilized CW for general teacher development worldwide is National Writing Projects (NWP) (e.g., Athans, 2021). For over four decades subject-matter teachers have experienced positive results in voluntary CW communities of practice; in contrast, little has been done similarly with foreign/L2 language teachers in NWP (Kathleen Riley, Senior Programs and Operations Manager of NWP, personal communication, 2023). If one does attempt an intervention to develop L2 teachers’ own CW, one finds few references for effective design principles and little knowledge of the criteria for a successful L2 CW course (Reynolds et al., 2022).

One possible direction to design effective PD for experienced L2 teachers might be to follow the lead of private CW workshop instructors for interested adults who are not L2 teachers or even teachers at all. Such workshop instructors commonly utilize CW “craft tools”, such as how to design an imaginary character or how to write effective dialogue. These craft tools are motivating and not commonly used in L2 classrooms; thus, they hold potential to be fresh to reignite experienced L2 teachers’ enthusiasm for CW. In the Israel educational context, L2 teachers are predominantly English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers and CW plays a very small part in their EFL classrooms. National matriculation exams have minimal CW requirements (e.g. “Describe a member of your family”) in both the Hebrew and Arabic language sectors (Pedagogical Secretariat, 2020). Thus, experienced EFL teachers in Israel have little opportunity or motivation to improve their own written language or their cognition (knowledge and beliefs) about CW.

The present study investigates an intervention attempting to provide such opportunity and motivation, within the context of a required foundation course in CW for experienced EFL teachers in an M.Ed. program. Teachers were immersed in weekly writing and publishing, not ‘learning about CW’ but rather experiencing transformations ‘from the inside’ as active creative writers (Perez, 1983). What would be the L2 teachers’ professional changes due to the intervention?

## 2. Literature Review

In order to design and investigate a CW intervention that might contribute to the professional development of experienced EFL teachers, several related fields of research are reviewed: (1) the dearth of research concerning L2 teachers’ own writing, particularly CW; (2) benefits of CW for L2 learners; (3) benefits of CW for subject-matter (non-L2) teacher development; (4) CW craft tools; and (5) design principles for CW intervention.

### 2.1. The dearth of research concerning L2 teachers’ own writing, particularly CW

Studies on teachers’ writing development in general and CW in specific have been neglected. In a review article of roughly 60 journals of 2018 concerning L2 writing research (Silva et al., 2019), the authors stress the “vital

and vibrant field” (p.5) of students’ needs in writing. In contrast, few studies addressed the writing development of L2 teachers, with the exceptions being L2 teachers’ own journal writing (Khanjani et al., 2018), web-based writing platforms (Yang, 2018), and development of pedagogical content knowledge of genre (Worden, 2019). Studies investigating PD for experienced L2 teachers’ own CW were absent altogether from the review.

Similarly, a review of L2 writing research from 1980-2020, concludes that there are few studies “to inform L2 writing teachers’ practice and professional development... either native or non-native speakers of the target language” (Zhang et al., 2022, p.1). A venerable review of L2 teacher cognition focused on what teachers think, know, believe, and do, with no mention of understanding or developing teachers’ cognition about CW (Borg, 2003). A more recent review (Levy, et al., 2023) of L2 teacher preparation found that “given the importance of L2 writing proficiency, there seems to be little research into how that proficiency can and should be developed over the course of a teaching career” (p.11).

### 2.2. Benefits of CW for L2 students

CW has been shown to be beneficial for L2 students (Reynolds et al., 2022) and contributes to a variety of areas, including the following: students’ autonomous learning and motivation (Wachtmeister & Efverlund, 2021); writing proficiency and motivation (Pelcova, 2015; Benegas et al., 2020); writer self-esteem (Zhao, 2014); writer agency (Zhao & Brown, 2014); and acquisition of grammar, vocabulary, communicative competence and motivation (Smith, 2013). Positive changes from L2 university learner engagement in CW have included increased creativity, self-expression and confidence (Maloney, 2022). In addition, CW has been shown to activate writers’ non-core vocabulary (Maloney, 2019); reinforce a stronger command of conventions such as spelling, mechanics, sentence structure and punctuation (Andrews, 2008); bring language from passive memory to active use (Maloney, 2019); and establish voice, promote viewpoint-taking, and transfer literacy from CW to academic writing in both L1 and L2 students (Nichols, 2023). It makes sense that these same benefits for L2 learners would be gained by L2 teachers who likewise engage in CW.

### 2.3. Benefits of CW for subject-matter (non-L2) teacher development

For over four decades, the foundational assumption of National Writing Projects (NWP) (Whitney, 2008) has been that all teachers, regardless of subject matter, need to teach writing. NWP have developed regular teachers’ own expressive writing (i.e. self-expression and reflection) and CW (e.g. imaginative storytelling). Unfortunately, only 1% of participating teachers, of those who have reported their subject matter to NWP, have been L2 teachers (Riley, personal communication, 2023).

Nevertheless, the benefits of NWP have been impressive. Positive and long-term outcomes of NWP for teachers have included improved expressive writing skills, personal transformation (Whitney, 2008); higher writing motivation and higher professional self-efficacy (Locke et

al., 2013). NWP's have helped teachers "change their philosophies about teaching writing and increase both the time spent on writing instruction and use of exemplary teaching practices" (Borko, 2004 p. 11). Participating subject-matter teachers have undergone *transformative changes* including changes in how they read and write, look at the world and feel about themselves (Whitney & Friedrich, 2013), and how they raise their professional confidence (Whitney & Friedrich, 2013). Transformative changes refer to changing one's assumptions and habitual expectations with critical reflection (Mazirow, 1991), which is no small achievement given that entrenched teacher beliefs are extremely challenging to change (Pajares, 1992). Indeed, in NWP's, teachers engaged in a voluntary, summer's daily writing discipline (Whitney, 2008) became "engaged in their profession again" (Smith & Wrigley 2012 p71).

In other studies beyond NWP's, CW has been shown to support positive changes for subject-matter teacher development (Cremin & Locke, 2016), such as stronger identities as teachers of writing (Zoch et al., 2016), deeper thinkers about writing and the writing process (e.g., Cremin et al., 2019), and increased relaxation as an antidote against teacher burnout (Martin et al., 2022).

While the benefits of CW for voluntary, subject-matter teachers have been well-documented, similar possible benefits for foreign/L2 teachers, whether native or non-native speakers, in a non-voluntary framework, have not been addressed. This area is the focus of the present study.

#### 2.4. CW craft tools

Studies which have utilized CW for subject-matter teacher PD frequently involve common classroom genres such as sonnets (Cummins et al., 2019), haiku (Iida, 2023); memoir (Braun & Crumpler, 2010); journals (Whitney, 2008); and autobiographies (Quintara et al., 2013). While these classroom genres are effective and motivating, there remains an additional array of potentially fresh writing tools which are commonly available for professional writers and writing workshops, but seldom utilized in L2 learning. I refer to CW *craft tools*.

The term "*craft*" has been referenced in studies referring to CW. In the context of Japanese foreign language education, Smith (2021) argues for students learning the *craft* (p.13) approach of creativity. Other researchers (e.g., Cremin et al., 2019; Smith & Wrigley 2012) relate to writers' understanding of CW as "the craft of what we do" and "craft knowledge", rather than a body of factual knowledge (Myhill et al., 2021) or pedagogical content knowledge about writing.

CW *craft tools* in the current study refer to numerous resources, often digital, which are commonly utilized in voluntary CW workshops for aspiring creative writers. For reader clarification, one might think of craft tools as strategies or the tricks that professionals know, to write good story, e.g., how to design a story arc (Khan Academy Storytelling: Pixar in a Box, 2023, Appendix C); how to write effective dialogue (Jenkins, 2023, Appendix C); how to keep a consistent point of view (Reedsy Blog, 2023, Appendix C); how to overcome writer's block (Writing is a

Virus, 2023). In Maker Movement studies (Schad & Jones, 2020), positive student empowerment has been shown among students who use creative, professional tools previously reserved for experts (Tesconi, 2017). These tools are lacking in L2 education and particularly in L2 teacher PD.

#### 2.5. Design principles for CW intervention

There is scarce scholarship concerning specific design principles for a successful L2 teacher CW course (Reynolds et al., 2022). Some researchers have suggested using general benchmarks, such as emphasizing meaning over form and creativity over language conventions (Bennett et al., 2008) or progressing from easy, short, closely mentored to independent, less constrained writing (Syrewicz, 2021). The American novelist, Anne Lamott (1994), suggests that CW instructors need to scaffold with "small assignments" requiring short, teachable writing activities practiced in a single session, which are motivating and appropriate for novice writers.

The quest for these design principles leads to a constructivist outlook (Ultinir, 2012), since this outlook focuses on active, transformative learner experiences (Whitney, 2008) that can lead to teachers' construction of new understandings and higher self-efficacy in a specific task (Bandura, 1986), i.e. effective L2 teacher change. The role of a constructivist PD instructor is to provide learners with experiences to help them develop professionally (Glaserfeld, 2005) in a safe learning environment (Roorda et al., 2011) by facilitating the development of their beliefs in their ability to perform a task, in this case, CW. A constructivist outlook about student engagement has been shown to contribute to L2 students' language achievement and learning motivation, e.g., "publishing" of students' written creations with Google slides (Choi & Kim, 2018) and digital storytelling to share meaningful writing (Lee & Park, 2018; Yang & Wu, 2012). Thus, adopting a constructivist outlook for teacher CW workshops is reasonable.

Other general design principles for teacher CW workshops include maintaining an atmosphere of a writing workshop with no numerical grades (Whitney & Friedrich, 2013), which has been shown to be effective for the improvement of writing and motivation (Guskey, 2019); requiring frequent and successful writing as a base to increase writing self-efficacy (Banegas & Lowe, 2021); and being positive for those both giving and receiving peer feedback (Hanjani & Li, 2014).

#### 2.6. Summary of the literature review

There is rich scholarship concerning writing research, yet its focus has been on students doing academic writing, and teachers teaching academic writing. There is sparse scholarship about the teaching of L2 CW. Even more rare are studies that investigate interventions designed to develop the professionalism of L2 teachers concerning their own CW, whether native or non-native speakers of their target language.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Question

What professional changes, if any, did experienced EFL teachers in a M.Ed. program undergo due to a PD workshop course that engaged with CW craft tools?

#### 3.2. Setting

The research took place at an academic, teacher development college of education, in central Israel near Tel Aviv that offers undergraduate B.Ed. degrees in five departments and four M.Ed. degrees. The M.Ed. Department of Teaching-English-as-an-International-Language (TEIL) accepts approximately 15-20 students per year. The PD intervention was given to incoming students as a foundation course in the two-year M.Ed. TEIL Department during the Fall semester, 2019-2020.

#### 3.3. Participants

The study involved 15 EFL teachers in their first semester in the M.Ed. TEIL program. One teacher of the original 16 teachers did not complete the pretest and was dropped from the study. The majority were experienced English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers; fourteen had 5-15 years of teaching experience and one teacher was a novice, with two years of experience. The majority were secondary school teachers: 9 taught in high school and 3 in middle school. The remaining three taught upper elementary (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) grades. All the teachers were female. The majority (11) of the participants were non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) whose native L1 was Hebrew or Russian; four were proficient native English speakers (NESTs) whose writing was rusty. The levels of written English varied among the participants: most could write at a basic, competent level and theoretically correct their own grammatical errors if pointed out; three NNESTs showed difficulties with forming correctly written English sentences. Virtually all were computer literate and most used email frequently.

#### 3.4. The Framework of the Course

The course was a required, one semester, foundation course to brush up the written English for all incoming teachers in the M.Ed. TEIL program. It was a 'hybrid' course with four double face-to-face (f2f) lessons (3 class hours each) and six online synchronous lessons (1.5 hours each); thus, the instructor met the teachers f2f or in synchronous zoom sessions over the span of 14 weeks. Resources, links, examples, skill-templates and weekly assignments were uploaded to the college's Moodle (online, educational platform) where students uploaded their work and received feedback from the instructor and other participants (See Appendix A: *Course units in order of instruction*).

#### 3.5. The instructor

The instructor was also the researcher. Her professional background included the following: 40+ years as a college lecturer; a researcher in teacher PD including constructivist teacher learning (Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld,

2004); a native English speaker; a motivated reader of fiction; a hobbyist creative writer; and a participant in multiple, professional CW groups.

#### 3.6. The intervention: Design principles of the Course

Design principles of the course were developed from the research literature (See Section 2.5) as well as from the instructor's teaching and writing experience. The course was designed as an informal writing workshop, with feedback but no numerical grades during the semester. The instructor gave oral and written feedback with generous encouragement for each assignment. The teachers wrote weekly, submitted multiple, edited drafts and shared their writing on digital publishing tools almost weekly. From the first session, all participants shared or "published" their own edited, written products.

#### 3.7. The intervention: Scaffolding and using professional-writer CW craft tools

Almost each of the 14 sessions included the following: motivational, professionally written models; simplified writing samples; instructor-mentoring; explicit, written directions; peer-sharing and scaffolding (See Appendix B. *Examples of scaffolding*). CW craft tools were the foundation of many lessons, e.g., developing a story arc, creating unique names for characters, writing short compelling dialogue and more. Resources of professional CW craft tools were uploaded to the Moodle (See Appendix C. *Examples of online professional CW craft tool resources*).

A majority of the assignments required drafts and "publishing" of the teachers' short, written products alone or with other teachers on shared, digital platforms including Google Slides, Power Point ebooks and Ourboox (a digital flipbook).

#### 3.8. Data collection and analysis

The study used mixed-methods with qualitative and quantitative instruments, including pre/posttest questions, the instructor's log, and written reflections to assess any teacher change. The pre/post questionnaire included both open-ended questions and items on a 5pt rating scale (See Appendix D for pre/posttest questions). Qualitative analysis was conducted according to the grounded theory of Charmaz (2003) to evaluate evidence of personal and professional changes which may have emerged. Teachers' responses were read and coded by the author for emerging themes which were then categorized into final themes. The following sources of data were coded: open-ended pre/post test questions; three written, open-question responses after the course in the Final Portfolio (FP); written final reflections (FR) in the Final Portfolio; and the researcher's log of weekly sessions and individual discussions during the semester. Changes in participants' self-efficacy concerning writing, beliefs about the writing process and interest in writing were analyzed quantitatively from written responses with a *paired samples t-test*. Intercoder reliability was established with a second researcher; qualitative results were accepted when agreement between the two researchers on category assignment was 90% or more (Neuendorf, 2002).

### 3.9. Ethical issues

Informed consent was obtained from participants who were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the data. In addition, approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the English as an International Language Department at Talpiot Academic College.

## 4. Findings

The findings indicate that teachers underwent changes which fell into three themes:

- (1) changes about “me as a writer” in English;
- (2) changes in cognition about CW (the process of writing and the quality of written products);
- (3) changes as an EFL teacher.

This paper addresses the first two sets of changes. Changes as EFL teachers will be addressed in a separate paper.

### 4.1. Changes about “me as a writer” in English

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the teachers (Ts) came with very little experience learning or teaching CW.

**Table 1.** Teachers’ responses to: *What is your past experience with LEARNING creative writing, in any framework?* and *What is your past experience with TEACHING creative writing, in any framework?*

Number of Ts who have learned CW	Never	When young	I was	During my B.Ed.
9	2			4
Number of Ts who have taught CW	Never	A little bit	A lot	
11	3		1	
		(“I have taught (for the last my 5 <sup>th</sup> graders; 8 years) 10 <sup>th</sup> graders; last year my 8 <sup>th</sup> graders”)		

One teacher explained that she had never been asked to engage in CW in school:

*While I was taking the survey before the course started, I realized that I have absolutely no experience in creative writing. I tried to understand how did it happen and the answer was very simple. As a student in the school, I was never required to write something that was somehow connected to creative writing, everything I did in school was Matriculation oriented in the most boring way possible. Teacher (T)13*

From an analysis of post-workshop written reflections, teachers attributed the activity of writing as a catalyst for their change:

*Having to go through the writing process myself, which I haven't done for such a long time, has enabled me to think differently about my teaching and my students (T10)*

*If teachers experience CW themselves, they can apply it with students. (T8)*

Based on the qualitative data from written responses and reflections and the instructor’s log, the following six changes emerged regarding the teachers as writers:

- (1) from negative to positive self-efficacy as writers
- (2) improved English writing proficiency
- (3) from negative to positive self-efficacy concerning their belief they can publish their writing.
- (4) increased self-efficacy in CW activities addressed in the course; reduced self-efficacy in CW activities not addressed.
- (5) increased interest in writing
- (6) more appreciative of writers of literature and more discerning as readers.

#### 4.1.1. From negative to positive self-efficacy as writers

During class discussions and in Final Reflections, participants frequently expressed their initial negative feelings about themselves as writers, including self-criticism, self-doubts, anxiety and fears about CW:

*The idea of creating pieces of writing always interested me, but I never knew how to start this process. T7*

*Before we started, I never believed I could publish anything... before the course I was a nervous wreck” T13*

In Final Reflections, participants expressed increased satisfaction, inspiration and enjoyment as writers.

*Reading all our writing assignments [after the course], the drafts and the final products has given me a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment... Moreover, I found that the various writing assignments were often liberating, inspiring and even enjoyable. T8*

*I have accomplished... improved my writing... gained confidence as a teacher. T8*

From discussions documented in the weekly written log, many teachers expressed enjoyment and excitement for CW that they had not previously experienced. Individuals said they wanted to continue to write and were surprised at their own enthusiasm. One participant took the instructor aside the third week of the semester and half-humorously shared the following:

*I never thought writing could be so much fun! I want to give up teaching and become a full time writer, ha ha! T7*

#### 4.1.2. Teachers reported improved English writing proficiency

Regarding teachers’ perceived writing improvement (Appendix D, Q#1), the average score was 4.6 on a 5pt rating scale. This finding corroborates findings from the instructor’s log during class discussions; virtually all the teachers, including the four Native-English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs), expressed that their written English had improved, particularly their vocabulary (See Appendix E for examples of teacher writing). In Final Reflections teachers commented on their improved writing, reflecting on the causes of writing improvement which included much writing and editing, sharing their writing, and the necessity to use richer vocabulary:

*My English got so much better since we had to write,*

write, write. T12

*The instructor helped me edit my sentences, dialogue, paragraphs... other students would see my writing... I didn't realize how much I need to work on my written English. T4*

#### 4.1.3. Teachers reported changes from negative to positive self-efficacy concerning their belief they can publish their writing

Initially, on pre-intervention questions, not a single teacher indicated they wanted to take this required course, had published any writing, or believed they could publish anything. Many statements on open questions in the pre intervention questionnaire reflected initial reluctance and negative self-image as writers. This initial low self-efficacy changed in Final Reflections to higher self-efficacy and confidence as writers.

*I feel that this course has given me confidence expressing myself in writing as a nonnative speaker of English. I never thought I could manage writing a short story in English on my own. It went way beyond my expectations. T13*

*The creative writing course has made me believe in my ability to write creatively. I could not believe that I would write so much, so beautifully, and so touching. T8*

#### 4.1.4. Teachers increased self-efficacy significantly in CW activities addressed in the course, but reduced their self-efficacy in CW activities not addressed in the course.

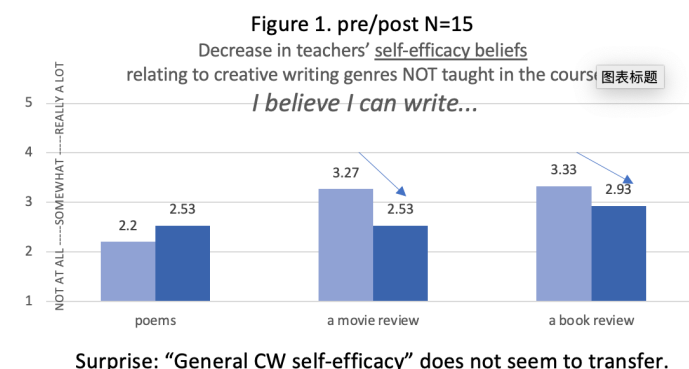
As a result of the CW course, teachers significantly increased their self-efficacy in CW activities they had accomplished in the course: *publishing my writing, writing a short fiction story and memoir, developing a topic to write about, finding meaningful material to teach CW, and developing a character* (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** Changes in T's writing self-efficacy pre-post (N=15)

Pre-post question	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>I believe I can...</i>			
publish my writing	3.290	14	.005
write a short fiction story	2.086	14	.056
write a short memoir story	4.012	14	.001
develop an idea/topic to write about	2.739	14	.016
find meaningful material to teach creative writing	4.026	14	.001
develop an imaginary character	4.432	14	.001
write poems	1.323	14	.207
write a book review	1.247	14	.233
write a movie review	1.911	14	.077

In contrast, teachers reduced their self-efficacy in CW activities not addressed in the course: *poems, a book review or a movie review*. In these three genres, self-efficacy as writers decreased (Figure 1), although not significantly (Table 2). In short, the teachers' increased self-efficacy in writing was not applicable to general writing development but rather to specific accomplishments; the self-efficacy did not transfer to

writing areas they had not explicitly attempted.



#### 4.1.5. Teachers increased their interest in writing

The pre/posttest question (Appendix D, Q#3) asked about interest in writing: "Is there anything you'd be interested in writing (e.g. your grandpa's immigration experience, the time your brother tripped you, a children's book, an annotated book of your family's recipes, a horror story, a novel)? Teachers were asked to add examples (Table 3). Teachers whose answer indicated "yes" to that question, increased from 40% on the pretest to 87% on the posttest, a 47% change. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre and posttest answers. The results indicate a highly significant increase in the teachers' interest in writing after the intervention (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Pre/Posttest: Teacher interest in writing: "Is there anything you'd be interested in writing?"

Answer	Examples typifying the answer	Pretest N=15	Posttest N=15
<b>No</b>	<i>I think I am too old to write stories.</i>	7 teachers (60%)	2 teachers (13%)
<b>I have nothing I want to write.</b>	<i>Not really.</i> <i>I haven't really given it any thought.</i>		
<b>Yes</b>	<i>Writing about my dear grandma and her life-changing experience;</i> <i>Maybe short memoirs from various timelines;</i> <i>My current pregnancy;</i> <i>I've always dreamt of writing a book.</i>	8 teachers (40%)	13 teachers (87%)

**Table 4.** Paired samples t-test: Significant increase of positive response to teachers' interest in writing something pre-post (N=15)

Pre-post question	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Is there anything you'd be interested in writing? No/Yes	3.500	14	.004

#### 4.1.6. Teachers became more appreciative of writers of literature and more discerning as readers.

In a post-intervention question (Appendix D, Q#6), teachers were asked, "In what ways have you changed as a reader, if at all, as a result of the course?: a. I appreciate the efforts of writers more now; b. I recognize a story arc more; c. I'm more enthusiastic about reading stories now. Using a 5-point rating scale, teachers' scores reflected an appreciation of writer effort "quite a lot" (4.1). They

expressed less changes concerning recognizing a story arc (3.6) and enthusiasm about reading stories (3.3).

In class discussions, particularly in the final sessions, teachers, almost all of whom taught literature, explained that after the course, they were more appreciative of written products.

*I'm much more appreciative now of reading since I see how hard it is to write. T13*

One teacher explained that good stories were a bit less magical to her, now that she knew the backstory of what authors do to design a good story arc and an imaginary character; she also expressed a new lack of patience with a published story that is not written well.

*I recognize good writing more now. This is not so good - I'm more judgmental as a reader - hey don't tell me, show me! ...I've seen the "back story" of what goes into writing a creative story. It takes some of the magic out. T5*

#### 4.2. Changes in teachers' cognition about the process and products of CW

Teachers underwent changes in cognition (knowledge and beliefs) about the process and products of CW. Three open pre/post questions dealt with the process of CW: (1) the process of what writers do first, second and third (Appendix D Q#2); (2) what to do if one gets "writers block" (Q#3); and (3) what would you tell the Ministry of Education concerning CW in the EFL program (Q#10)?.

Four categories of changes emerged concerning teachers' positive changes in cognition (knowledge and beliefs):

- (1) Increased professional knowledge about the process of what creative writers do.
- (2) Increased professional knowledge about the process of tackling "writers' block".
- (3) Increased professional beliefs about the writing process.
- (4) Increased professional knowledge about the

products of good writing.



##### 4.2.1. Increased professional knowledge about the process of what creative writers do.

The following question was analyzed qualitatively (Q#2 in Appendix D). In your opinion, what is the process of writing a short story (what would a writer do first, second, third & so on)? On the pretest, participants wrote conventional, superficial responses, e.g., that writers had to first brainstorm and think about a character, plot, setting, ending, problem, resolution, and then had to write drafts, proofread and edit (Table 5). As experienced EFL teachers, most had taught the parts of short stories and could say what a writer must do on a theoretical level. Basically, they could "talk the talk" of what they assumed writers theoretically do.

On the posttest, participants included the same conventional parts of what a writer does (brainstorm, think about a character, plot and so on). But in contrast, many participants also added specific actions of how a writer would go about writing a story. The following were the additional suggestions that teachers made in the posttest concerning what writers do: combine traits of people you know; make a story arc; fill out a five senses chart for sensory writing; answer 10 questions about your character; think about your own life; take headlines from newspapers and magazines; look at Google images for inspiration; use your imagination; look for emotional incidents in your life. Basically, the teachers could more closely "walk the walk" of how authors go about writing a story (Table 5).

Thus, teachers had moved from pretest brief, common, "pat answers", to longer, more specific posttest answers with deeper and more detailed knowledge of what writers do to create a story. The analysis shows that their knowledge about CW had developed from novice, superficial and theoretical, to deeper, more detailed knowledge about what writers do. Thus, the teachers had enriched their cognition about what writers do during the CW process.

**Table 5.** Examples of two teachers’ responses: summary and analysis on Pre/Post (Q2): *In your opinion, what would a writer do first, second, third and so on?*

Teacher (T)	T’s Pretest Response	Summary of response	T’s Posttest response	Summary of response
T#4	<i>First, to think about the target audience (kids, teens or adults) Second, to think about the main characters, Third, to think about the type of the plot (romance, science fiction, etc.)  Then....use your imagination and creativity.</i>	1. Think about audience (kids, teens, adults)  2. Think about main characters  3. Think about type of plot (romance, science fiction)  4. Use imagination & creativity	<i>First, the writer has to think about a topic that interested him. (He can take it from an article he read in the newspaper, the reality, his imagination, an incident a friend told him, a mind-provoking picture and so on.)  Then he has to answer 10 questions about that topic (for e.g where does it happen? When? Who are the characters? etc.  Third, he has to write a story spine to that plot (beginning, problem, climax..)</i>	1. Author thinks about topic that interests the author (help from sources, e.g., newspaper, realia, imagination, incident, picture)  2. Answers 10 guiding questions about the topic (where, when, who?)  3. Writes a story spine (plot: beg, problem, climax)
		<b>Pretest Analysis:</b> *General *Superficial *Common “pat” answer		<b>Posttest Analysis:</b> *Specific details *Deeper *Reflects knowledge of writer’s process
T#13	<i>Draft, writing, editing</i>	1. Draft 2. Write 3. Edit	<i>Developing characters of the story. Building a story spine, writing every part of the story spine. Read it and edit. Add more details - show, don't tell. Edit, edit, edit.</i>	1. Develop characters 2. Build story spine 3. Write parts of story spine. 4. Read it 5. Edit it. 6. Add details 7. Show, don't tell 8. Edit
		<b>Pretest Analysis:</b> *General *Superficial *Common, “pat” answer *Brief		<b>Posttest Analysis:</b> *Specific steps *Deeper *Reflects knowledge of writer’s process *Longer

**4.2.2. More professional knowledge regarding the process of tackling “writers’ block”.**

On the pre-test Q#3, *We all get "writers' block". What are some ways that can help you develop an interesting character for a story?*, teachers wrote a total of 17 statements of ways to go about developing an interesting character in the case of writers’ block (Table 6). On the post-test, they had 58.8% more statements (27) but more

notable was the higher quality of their statements. On the pretest, they had only general knowledge-statements of how to go about developing an imaginary character (e.g. ‘make the character complicated’). On the posttest, teachers had specific knowledge-statements of the process (e.g. ‘combine traits of several people you know.’). Thus, teachers had developed not just more knowledge; they had developed richer, more specific knowledge of the process of writing about the process of developing a CW character.



**Table 6. Pre/Post open (Q#3): (N=15) We all get "writers' block". What are some ways that can help you develop an interesting character for a story?**

<b>Category of statements</b>	<b>Examples of Teachers' statements</b>	<b>Pretest</b> amt. of statements N=15 (some Ts wrote more than 1 statement)	<b>Post test</b> amt. of statements N=15 (some Ts wrote more than 1 statement)
Watch random people	<b>Pretest:</b> <i>look at what surrounds us; the world we live in; watch those around us carefully; real life; imagine who they are &amp; their story; use an ordinary person a reader can relate to.</i>  <b>Posttest:</b> <i>Base on real characters from your surroundings; think of any individual and a setting for that character, like a person who works in a supermarket, or anyone you see walking in the street; look at people around you; base a character on someone you know; go walking; take inspiration from people around us; look at your surroundings; people watching; real life situations; look around</i>	6	11
Pictures	<i>Look at pictures</i>	1	1
Watch movies	<i>Watch a movie</i>	1	1
Write adjectives	<i>Write adjectives or words to develop a character</i>	1	0
<b>General process</b> (how to develop a character)	<b>Pretest</b> <i>Read; do research; search for inspiration; talk to others; relax; make a character different from others; make the character complicated, ambiguous, need to grow &amp; change</i>	7	0
<b>Specific process</b> (how to develop a character)	<b>Pretest</b> <i>look at random people on the bus or train station</i>	1	0
	<b>Posttest (14 total)</b> <i>use a chart to fill out senses (a structured tool to help the writer) (1)</i> <i>think about elements of people we know (1)</i> <i>ask precise questions about your character before writing: male/female; age; religion (1)</i> <i>work with a name generator (2)</i> <i>work with character development sites (1)</i> <i>see how your character faces crises (1)</i> <i>combine traits of several people you know to make an imaginary character (2)</i> <i>combine different people and make one character(1)</i> <i>listen to a song (1)</i> <i>go shopping (1)</i> <i>browse through a magazine (1)</i> <i>look at random Google pictures (1)</i>	0	14
		17 total statements	27 total statements

4.2.3. Changes in professional beliefs regarding the writing process.

In addition to more and richer level knowledge about the process CW, the teachers expressed changes in beliefs about the process of CW. In post-intervention Q#10 *What*

*would you tell the Ministry of Education concerning creative writing in the EFL program?*, as well as in final written reflections, two themes emerged: (a) creativity can be taught and (b) drafts are important.

a. *Creativity can be taught*

During initial class discussion, teacher comments reflected a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006), e.g. “writers are born” rather than developed. In final, post-intervention reflections, participants wrote that CW can indeed be taught, and that “writers are made”, which reflects a “growth mindset” prevalent among effective teachers.

*Creativity is a muscle that can be trained. T5*

*I've learned that creative writing is a process that can be taught and the hard work is eventually worthwhile, fulfilling and even fun. T7*

**b. Drafts are important.**

Writing of drafts is not common practice in Israeli classrooms in L1 or L2 classes. After writing many drafts and seeing their writing and final products improve, teachers expressed new appreciation for drafts.

*'Drafts are more important than I thought. I wrote about 3 drafts for each assignment, maybe more... I never wrote drafts before. I used to think that good writers just wrote and handed it in. Really, a good writer writes more than one draft!' T13*

**4.2.3. More professional cognition regarding the products of good writing.**

In contrast to the above three areas about teacher cognition regarding the *process* of CW, the teachers also responded to the issue of CW *products*: ‘In your opinion, what makes a story really good?’ (Appendix D Q#4). Responses were scored regarding the quantity and quality of the answers (Table 7). The quantity of the answers was measured by the number of details mentioned by the 15 teachers. Regarding responses about the quality of written products, it emerged that teachers’ responses fell into one

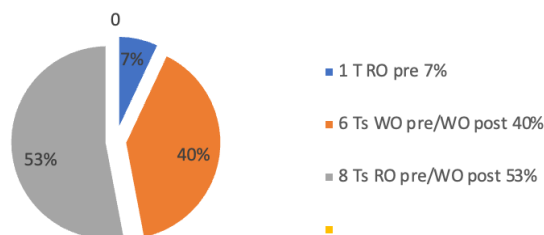
or both of the following categories: (a) reader-oriented answers (e.g. ‘When you feel you can't put the book down until you've finished it all’); and (b) writing-oriented answers (e.g. a problem that needs to be solved; great visual images; when the writer shows rather than tells.)

The quantity of answers on the pre and post were similar (33 statements pre vs. 35 statements post) (Table 7). In contrast, there was a significant change in the quality of teachers’ answers. Analysis of the answers showed that a majority (8 teachers, 53%) had made a net change by moving from reader-oriented answers on the pretest to writing-oriented answers on the post. Six teachers (40%) had already included writing-oriented answers on the pretest. Thus, on the posttest, virtually all the teachers (93%) included writing oriented (WO) elements when evaluating good story (Fig. 3).

Teachers had broadened their perspective on the pretest from a local, reader orientation (RO) (‘the reader can't leave the book’) to a broader, more professional writing orientation (WO) on the posttest, that included statements reflecting knowledge about character (“a developed, interesting character”), language (“great visual images created through language”) and story structure (“a good story spine”). The claim can be made that the teachers had gained a higher level of discernment and language regarding the quality of good creative writing. Thus, considering that the majority were middle and high school EFL teachers, all of whom teach EFL literature, they had gained a higher level of professionalism regarding their subject matter of EFL literature. All of the teachers expressed a writing orientation on the posttest except for one (7%).

**Table 7. Pre/Post Q3 In your opinion, what makes a story really good? (N=15)**

Answer	Examples: Teacher statements typifying orientation (RO or WO)	Pretest (33 total details mentioned)	Posttest (35 total details mentioned)
<b>Reader-oriented</b>	<i>When the reader can't leave the book.</i>	8 teachers	4 teachers
	<i>A good story makes you think after reading it.</i>		
	<i>Keeps the reader interested.</i>		
<b>RO</b>	<i>You feel you have learned from the story.</i>		
<b>Writing-oriented</b>	<i>Its plot (the conflict and how it is solved).</i>	7 teachers	11 teachers (some had both reader & writing centered).
	<i>Has an unexpected ending without cliches.</i>		
	<i>The main character deals with an unsolved problem.</i>		
<b>WO</b>	<i>Everything goes wrong.</i>		
	<i>A good story spine.</i>		
	<i>When the writer shows rather than tells.</i>		



**Figure 3. Pre/post Q4. What makes a story really good? (N = 15)**

**5. Summary of Findings**

Data emerged that the 15 EFL teachers underwent positive professional changes in two broad areas:

(1) *Changes regarding teachers themselves as writers.* Teachers improved their writing proficiency in the context of writing weekly and improving drafts; they reported increased enjoyment and significantly higher self-efficacy as writers of scaffolded assignments designed for weekly writer success; they significantly increased

their interest to write and to improve their writing, particularly their vocabulary, reportedly because they received feedback and their writing was publicly shared weekly on digital platforms.

(2) *Changes regarding their cognition about CW.* From strong, qualitative data, findings emerged that teachers increased their knowledge about what it takes to write (process) and raised their discernment and appreciation for good story (product). The teachers gathered firsthand the amount of time and effort that goes into writing good story and the value of drafts.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

The study contributes to the field of professional development of experienced L2 teachers in five areas:

### 6.1. Developing writing teacher expertise “from the inside”(Perez,1983) with a constructivist approach, is beneficial for L2 teachers.

Instead of learning more about writing, the teachers wrote. Instead of “routine expertise” (Hirvela & Belcher 2022; Lee & Yuan, 2021), e.g. learning the rules for writing a 5-paragraph essay, or learning how to assess an essay, the teachers developed “writing expertise” (Weigle, 2005). Writing expertise is a step into 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, where learners gain global competencies such as agency, creativity, and digital literacy (OECD, 2019), where learners “do writing” rather than “do school”, where learners change from consumers to creators. The teachers experienced firsthand the amount of time and effort that goes into creating a short, imaginary character sketch, a collaborative story spine and more. Teachers expressed that their own personal struggles and time invested in writing was what strongly contributed to their improved written English proficiency, their new depth of understanding about themselves and satisfaction as writers, and their increased appreciation for professional writers.

The constructivist intervention was especially beneficial, since L2 teachers need to wrestle with writing (Graves, 1983) for them to become professional in L2 written language. The L2 teachers experienced and succeeded with the challenges of writing they had rarely encountered previously. Being immersed in the struggles of CW, including the process of creating multiple drafts, looking up vocabulary words, and publishing final drafts on digital platforms shared publicly, contributed to L2 teacher changes in “me as a writer” as well as “cognition about CW”.

Teachers learned from experience that each genre (e.g. 10-word stories, character sketch, memoir story and so on), took scaffolding, instructor mediation, peer feedback, drafts and time. On the pretest, they had believed that writing a movie or book review was easy. After the course, their self-efficacy beliefs about writing these unexplored new genres decreased. From having personally experienced the process of composing a good CW product, they had become more professional in writing and understood that good writing is not as easy as they had thought. The study strongly supports the claim that the

teachers’ transformational experiences of struggling and succeeding in CW “from the inside” is one of the central factors that contributed to their professional changes.

### 6.2. CW craft tools offer benefits for L2 teacher professional development (PD).

The data show that having experienced CW craft tools (e.g. designing an imaginary character), teachers became more professional regarding literature, moving from local, reader-oriented to more global, writing-oriented. Their self-efficacy had improved not as writers in general but rather in the specific area of what they had experienced “from the inside”. This finding underlines the importance of such hands-on PD intervention where L2 teachers write. Without engaging in CW, L2 teachers risk stagnation in aspects of their own written language and eventually that of their students. Some experienced L2 teachers do teach common school CW (e.g. haiku, poems, descriptive essays). Nevertheless, the study showed that CW craft tools, with their refreshingly un-school flavor, hold promise to encourage enthusiasm and motivation for experienced L2 teachers to engage in writing, even among those who are in a non-voluntary workshop.

### 6.3. L2 teacher educators need to address the PD of experienced L2 teachers.

Most research with L2 teachers has been conducted predominantly with preservice and novice teachers likely due to the necessity for their intensive development and possibly their convenient availability. Assuming that globally, most L2 teachers eventually become experienced, teacher educators neglect a huge group of L2 teachers by not developing their continued professionalism in their own target language writing.

### 6.4. Design principles.

The design principles contributed to the professional development of the L2 teachers, being long-term; structured from short and easy to longer, more independent; with feedback but no semester numerical grades; mentored by an instructor personally motivated by CW; aimed at teacher success in digitally publishing their drafted writing from the first session; and finally, adhering to a constructivist outlook whereby teachers did not learn about writing but rather wrote and wrote, i.e. they changed from the inside.

### 6.5. A step to encourage 21<sup>st</sup> century L2 professional teachers.

The study supports the claim that L2 teacher PD utilizing CW craft tools, such as outlined above, can have significant and positive effects on the professional development of experienced L2 teachers. This is encouraging for L2 secondary teachers worldwide, many of whom might have less than proficient English, less than robust motivation to improve their own written language and little time to include CW when their curriculum stresses proficiency. The goal of such PD is not to change L2 teachers into creative writers but to renew and broaden their engagement in their subject matter of language.

National Writing Project (NWP) researchers (Smith & Wrigley, 2012) find that when teachers start writing, 'it engages them intellectually in their profession again' (Andrews, 2008, p.37).

The simplified concept of the intervention is that the L2 teachers succeeded in writing creatively and were proud of their short, shared, published creations; in turn, the teachers turned around and applied the easy, scaffolded steps and writing examples, replicating with their students what they had just experienced. This circular process, incorporating an active, constructivist, from-the-inside process of change, can support professional teachers. Perhaps in this line of research, experienced L2 teachers globally can likewise 'renew their passion for their profession' (Whitney & Freidrich, 2013), raise their level of writing and raise their professionalism for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching.

## 7. Limitations of the study

The study was exploratory, due to the scarcity of prior research about developing experienced L2 teachers with the craft of CW. Thus, the study had a broad outlook; results that emerged from the data touched the surface of multiple important areas which linked CW and experienced L2 teachers, including: L2 teacher *identity* as writers; developing L2 teacher *cognition* about CW; developing L2 teacher *self-efficacy as writers*; developing *agency* of L2 teachers to teach CW; developing L2 teachers *growth mindset* regarding CW; designing *transformative CW experiences* for L2 teachers; developing L2 teacher *motivation* (Lamb & Wyatt, 2019) to write; using *technology-enhanced and digital platforms* for L2 teacher writing; *measuring teachers' CW development*; multiple ways of giving *feedback vs written grades* in an L2 teacher writing-workshop approach.

Future studies should recruit L2 teachers, particularly NNESTs, from various countries and learning contexts, and make use of multiple CW craft tools and teacher transformative experiences involving their own L2 writing.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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