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**Boosting creative writing in the English  
classroom through creative journals:  
A didactic proposal**

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, schools do not seem to expose their student body to enough English writing practice, while EFL learners see it as a daunting and challenging experience. This study aims to examine the presence of creativity in English classrooms and show the benefits of including creative writing as a regular activity in the English curriculum. Following an overview of some relevant research on creativity and written expression, the study presents three instruments along with a didactic proposal that have been designed to be implemented in a 2nd of ESO class, in which five English teachers would participate. The goal is to gather enough data to measure the impact that creative writing could have on students' motivation, and the development and possible improvement of their written expression. Creative writing can be a useful and fun tool for having a better understanding of the language, reading, writing, and communicative skills, building self-confidence, and boosting self-expression. Thus, it is intended to be promoted through a motivating, engaging, and meaningful didactic proposal, enclosed in *creative journals*, where students can explore their language skills and enhance imagination, inventiveness, and self-exploration.

Due to the exceptional situation in Spain, it has not been possible to carry out this study, but in any case, it presents the basis for future lines of research to put it into practice.

**Keywords:** Creativity, creative writing, written expression, creative journal, English as a foreign language

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## RESUM

Avui dia, els alumnes no estan prou exposats a escriure anglès a les escoles, i alhora, ho veuen com una experiència intimidant i complexa. Aquest estudi té com a objectiu examinar la presència que té la creativitat a les aules d'anglès i mostrar els beneficis d'incloure l'escriptura creativa com una activitat regular en el currículum de l'assignatura de llengua anglesa. Després d'una visió general d'algunes recerques rellevants sobre la creativitat i l'expressió escrita, es presenten tres instruments junt amb una proposta didàctica per ser implementats en una classe de 2n d'ESO i en la que hi participarien cinc professors d'anglès. L'objectiu és recollir dades suficients que permetin mesurar l'impacte que l'escriptura creativa podria tenir en la motivació

dels estudiants, i en el desenvolupament i possible millora de la seva expressió escrita. L'escriptura creativa pot ser una eina útil i divertida per a un millor coneixement de la llengua, la lectura, l'escriptura, i les habilitats comunicatives, per a desenvolupar la confiança en un mateix i impulsar l'autoexpressió. Per tant, tot això es pretén promoure mitjançant una proposta didàctica motivadora, atractiva i significativa, resumida en forma de *diari creatiu*, on els estudiants poden explorar les seves habilitats lingüístiques i potenciar la imaginació, l'originalitat i l'exploració personal.

A causa de la situació excepcional a Espanya, no ha estat possible realitzar aquest estudi, però en qualsevol cas, presenta les bases perquè futures línies de recerca el puguin posar en pràctica.

**Paraules clau:** Creativitat, escriptura creativa, expressió escrita, diari creatiu, anglès com a llengua estrangera

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## RESUMEN

Hoy en día, los estudiantes no están lo suficientemente expuestos a la escritura en inglés en los colegios, y al mismo tiempo, la ven como una experiencia intimidante y compleja. Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar la presencia que tiene la creatividad en las aulas de inglés y mostrar los beneficios de incluir la escritura creativa como una actividad regular en el plan de estudios de la asignatura de inglés. Tras una visión general de algunas investigaciones relevantes sobre la creatividad y la expresión escrita, el estudio presenta tres instrumentos junto con una propuesta didáctica para ser implementados en una clase de 2º ESO, en el que participarían cinco profesoras de inglés. El objetivo es reunir datos suficientes que permitan medir el impacto que la escritura creativa podría tener en la motivación de los estudiantes, y en el desarrollo y posible mejora de su expresión escrita. La escritura creativa puede ser una herramienta útil y divertida para un mejor conocimiento de la lengua, la lectura, la escritura, y las habilidades comunicativas, para desarrollar la confianza en uno mismo e impulsar la autoexpresión. Por consiguiente, todo esto se pretende promover a través de una propuesta didáctica motivadora, atractiva y significativa, resumida en forma de *diario creativo*, donde los estudiantes pueden explorar sus habilidades lingüísticas y potenciar la imaginación, la originalidad y la exploración personal.

Debido a la situación excepcional en España, no ha sido posible realizar este estudio, pero en

cualquier caso, presenta las bases para que futuras líneas de investigación lo puedan poner en práctica.

**Palabras clave:** Creatividad, escritura creativa, expresión escrita, diario creativo, inglés como lengua extranjera

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our society is going through a crucial moment where the accuracy of information and immediacy are indispensable protagonists for communication between people. Moreover, our teenagers, and therefore, our students demand the same in the classroom. Thus, due to the growth of their critical thinking, and their social, emotional, and intellectual maturation, motivation and engagement are presented as titanic tasks for teachers, so is creativity. Although creativity is a common practice in Primary Education and almost a requirement in professional life, it seems to be neglected in Secondary Education, as much as writing practice (Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 2006). Students face the writing task with fear and insecurity (Mathers, 2005); for this reason, how can we teachers make writing motivating and promote creativity at the same time?

Taking into account the lack of time schools seem to have to focus on creativity (Gardner, 1995), and the willingness to find a way for students to see a purpose in writing in English, the present dissertation aims at exploring the role of creativity and written expression in the classroom, the notion of creative writing and its implementation in education. It means to contribute to and complement other existing research. Other objectives to be examined during this study, through different instruments, are the exposure to writing processes in the English curriculum and the students' and teachers' perceptions of creative writing.

There are two main goals for the implementation of the didactic proposal presented in this dissertation. Firstly, to make both students and teachers aware of the benefits that creative writing can provide to the development of language abilities, the understanding of the functions of written language (Young, 2006), and personal development. Secondly, to make learning more meaningful, lasting, and closer to their interests (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), while awakening their curiosity and making them participants of their own learning. As a result, this study wants to present enough evidence for creative writing to be included and considered relevant within the curriculum.

In order to achieve these objectives, three instruments (five teachers' interviews, a survey, and two written expression compositions), in conjunction with the didactic proposal, have been designed to gather all the information.

Unfortunately, due to the current situation, it has not been possible to conduct this study thoroughly.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In this paper, the research questions that will be examined are:

- What perceptions do students have of creative writing?
- What role does creative writing play in the English curriculum?
- What would be the benefits of including creative writing activities in class?
- How can teachers create an engaging and effective environment for written expression?
- What opportunities do schools offer to students to explore their creativity?

The main goal of this research paper is to explore the perceptions of written expression and creativity and to analyze the effectiveness of the two concepts combines. Therefore, there are five objectives to investigate:

1. To inquire into teachers' and students' habits and perceptions of creativity and creative writing.
2. To check the role and exposure to writing processes in the English curriculum.
3. To explore the impact of creative writing on the development of written expression and motivation among students.
4. To measure the improvement of written expression and creativity by analyzing students' compositions before and after the didactic proposal.
5. To suggest the incorporation of creative writing as a regular activity in the English classroom.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section, some research and authors will be referenced outlining a theoretical approach to the different topics related to the current study: creativity in ELT, the role of writing, benefits of creative writing, and the use of journals as a tool. This will help to support the consequent didactic proposal presented in this dissertation.

#### **3.1. Creativity in the English classroom**

Creativity has always been linked to the arts, but it applies a diversity of fields, such as architecture, technology, business, medicine, among others, which are nourished and diversified between many areas of human knowledge and its multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1995). Thus, it has become a vast concept that it is difficult to give a precise and global definition. For instance, Sir Ken Robinson defines it as “the process of having original ideas that have value” (Robinson, 2016), which is interconnected with two correlative terms that feed the concept of creativity: imagination and innovation. The first one is its main root, and the second one, the result of it put into practice.

Creativity is not a linear process. It is not about learning and mastering skills before one starts doing something, but the process itself, the discovery and passion that the work implies (Robinson, 2016). This, applied to the educational field, supports the learning-by-doing approach, expounded by John Dewey, where students acquire skills naturally as they learn through motivating and meaningful activities. Robinson also argues that it is an essential aspect of teaching and learning, that influences teachers and worldwide educational policy to shape 21st-century learners.

Certainly, creativity in education has not been a specific objective of learning or a high priority for schools, as Howard Gardner affirms in *Creativity: New Views on Psychology and Education* (1995). He adds that for most teachers (and non-teachers), creativity is conceived as a mere extracurricular activity that creates disruption in class. It is described as an extremely challenging task, and rarely, yet again, “publicly welcomed, supported, or even acknowledged” by teachers (Smith et al., 2014).

This has also been illustrated by Maley (2015), he states that unless teachers show a commitment to creativity and provide students with a “richly varied diet” of creative content,



they will not learn creativity (Peachey & Maley, 2015, p. 8). It is necessary to expose them to this content as much as they are exposed to other disciplines and skills.

As for skills on the English curriculum, relevant to this research paper, the language model of the Catalan education system (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018) mentions on spoken, written, and reading communication:

“Skills in the language field refer to the use of language as a device for interpreting and understanding reality through oral and written texts, for communicating through speech and writing, and for organising and self-regulating thought, emotions and behaviour. These skills allow students to express thought, emotions, experiences and opinions, issue critical and ethical judgement, generate ideas and structure knowledge. This implies being able to read, listen, analyse, accept different opinions and express oneself adequately” (p. 42).

Subject to the relevance of the speaking, reading, and writing skills outlined in this extract, for instance, (oral) communication becomes key in language learning because of its multiple uses and applications, such as expressing opinions, share thoughts, emotions, or generating ideas, among other aspects. Language is a way to express ourselves and allows us to create new meanings, associations, and playful combinations (Maley & Bolitho, 2015, p. 435). Nevertheless, once in class, there are skills more highlighted than others, and more precisely, communication tasks, as Tin (2013) explores in her research paper, but what role can creativity play in all this? What influence can creativity have on language learning? The concept “language creativity”, coined by her, is defined as a way to build new meaning while playing with the language (Tin, 2013, p. 387). Hence teachers have the responsibility to expose learners to as much creative content as possible, and promote that “creative desire” to say something new (p. 396). “The core idea of ‘making something new’ is at the heart of creativity” (Peachey & Maley, 2015, p. 7).

Plenty of researchers advocate for the promotion of creativity, highlighting its main characteristics, for example, it enables to be imaginative, inventive, original, curious, resourceful, to adapt and improvise, to connect ideas in unusual ways, to think critically, and to communicate to make oneself understood (Jackson, 2008). While others, like Maley (2015), point out its benefits for learners, such as the improvement of their confidence, commitment,

and effectiveness of learning, as well as the enhancement of their self-esteem.

Following this, Maley (2015) suggests a series of strategies for teachers to incorporate creativity and develop creative activities in the English classroom, which also serves as motivation and guidelines to implement the didactic proposal, explained in the following sections:

- To create a relaxed and trustful atmosphere in class, where students do not feel judged or worried about expressing themselves or about making mistakes.
- To create constraints in activities, those restrictions, and limits when writing will “act as supportive scaffolding” so they will not have to write too generally.
- To display students' work in any way or media, so they will see their work is valued and appreciated.
- To encourage constructive feedback among students, to think critically, and give their honest opinions on other classmates' work with no offense.
- To promote curiosity and research of all kinds of resources.
- Not to rush or force things, introduce changes little by little.
- To set a regularity for the activities, low frequency will not be beneficial.
- To be there for the students and become a role model for them, if they see teachers do the same tasks alongside them, they will feel more engaged and motivated.
- To be able to see our students' potential and never underestimate them.
- To offer a “varied diet”, as mentioned before, to promote expectancy, not expectation.
- To follow four essential principles for students, “acknowledge, listen, challenge and support”, create a group community by promoting appreciation, openness, and encouragement to be better, and be supportive when they struggle.

(Peachey & Maley, 2015, p. 9-10)

### **3.2. The role of writing**

Creativity might be an “unfinished business” in schools, still difficult for teachers to address and include to their teaching, but surprisingly or not, writing is as well. The written expression skill is the ability to use writing as a tool to communicate, learn, and organize thoughts. The

language model of the Catalan education system (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018), emphasizes it as so:

“It is worth noting that regular practice is the key to gaining this competence. We learn to write by writing, so it is necessary to find moments to dedicate to written expression and its improvement” (p. 47).

However, reality is more particularly pragmatic. With reading, speaking, listening and writing being the four language skills in the process of language acquisition, writing is considered and accepted as the “last language skill” second and foreign language learners, and even native speakers, acquire (Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 2006, p. 13). Many English learners, as underlined by some studies, describe writing in English as a “daunting task”, they feel paralyzed, anxious and insecure (Mathers, 2005, p. 40), because they have difficulties at starting (Carter, 2015), and think they do not have ideas, or believe “their ideas are not good enough” (Brittain, 2019, p. 32).

When faced with such a situation, teachers need to find ways to turn this experience into something positive and motivating, a game-changer for students and teachers themselves. To make that change happen, teachers should design assignments to have their students exposed with meaningful activities (Larrauri, 2012, citing Dewey; Lagerwaard, 2020; Young, 2006; Borch, 2019; Lutzker, 2015), that are connected with their reality and their interests, while creating memorable, significant, and authentic learning. Since teachers are responsible for creating those learning spaces, they must become aware of the usefulness of writing and the benefits it provides to students, and on the rebound, to themselves, because one of the strategies to introduce creativity in the classroom, is for teachers to get involved and make both learners and themselves mutually engaged. Some authors (Baxter, 2009; Peyton and Reed, 1990) have driven the further development of the idea of doing the task along with students. They report that it allowed them to see firsthand the progress of the task from the students' point of view, as well as testing the duration of the task, setting more precise expectations, checking how appealing and motivating the given prompts were. This can also help build student-teacher relationships (Denne-Bolton, 2013).

Writing is about telling stories, having the power to express and present our thoughts and ideas, communicating with others, and, most importantly, learning about ourselves. Writing to learn promotes all sorts of abilities, such as discovery thinking, self-knowledge, imagination and development of ideas, and its primary goal is to please the person who writes, meaning oneself, instead of the reader, which is the goal of writing to communicate (Young, 2006). Consequently, the didactic proposal aims to make students feel comfortable when writing, promoting free writing, without worrying about pleasing, or meeting the teacher's expectations accurately. Once again, teachers are faced with the mission of encouraging learners to unleash the potential and power of their storytelling and self-expressing using their own voices (Gruwell, 2008, p. 13).

### **3.2.1. Creative writing**

One of the focuses of this study is to explore the possible benefits that creative writing can provide to the English subject and how it can help students improve their written expression and ignite their motivation. Several authors have shown that creative writing methods help students express themselves freely, it opens the doors of imagination, as well as acquiring a better understanding of the written language, developing new perspectives and language abilities, but above all, they are able to “experience the sheer joy of [learning a foreign language]” (Vecino, 2007, as cited in Avila, 2015, p. 94; Young, 2006).

Furthermore, using the language creatively also contributes to student-teacher interactions, course material awareness, and their language development (Young, 2006). Areas, like vocabulary, grammar, phonology, discourse, accuracy, and “sensitivity to rhythm, rhyme, stress, and intonation” improve significantly (Maley, 2006, as cited in Lutzker, 2015, p. 136).

As a result, it becomes clear that when students engage with the language, they can use it in interesting and unique ways to express themselves and create new meanings, at a deeper level, in addition to activating their imagination. If they are in control of the language and feel confident, it can also help them get rid of that anxiety and uncertainty when assigned a writing task in a foreign language. Pardlow (2003) stated in his paper that when providing students

with “specialized techniques of creative writing”, they did not suffer from writer’s block because the task was creative (as cited in Avila, 2015, p. 94).

Knowing that creative writing is recommended for all ages (Young, 2006), it should be noted that the didactic proposal, along with the survey, has been designed to be conducted with high education students. Adolescents not only have different ways to perceive creativity, artistic processes, and the world around them, they also experience “their own language, culture and “self” from another perspective”, as Lutzker (2015, p. 134) points out. Moreover, the type of writing that is proposed and presented in the classroom differs significantly from what and how adolescents write in other settings outside of school. Adolescents are influenced by technology and social media; they use those platforms to write, read, and communicate. This means that we teachers must present writing as an approachable and meaningful task, closer to their reality, interests, and needs, and besides giving them the tools, they need to explore those settings from different perspectives. It is crucial to support them through the writing process, and most importantly, to foster practice. Regular practice, referring back to Maley’s ‘strategies’ (2015), is key to become skilled at writing, Lutzker (2015) also agrees that creative writing is a “long-term process of developing perceptual, imaginative and expressive capabilities” (p. 135), and this is translated as another strong reason to make writing expression practice a regular class task.

### **3.2.2. Journal (writing) as writing medium**

A journal (or diary) is a record of daily entries where a person writes what happened during his/her day. However, the *creative journal*, as presented in the didactic proposal, takes the essence of writing and the personal connection to the object, as Baxter (2009) reports in the conclusions of his study on using journals in class for student’s self-reflection on their learning process. He recommends using paper-based journals as they “bring mind and body closer together” and also affirms that journals allow students to establish a closer connection with the learning material (p. 26).

Taking into account the benefits and advantages of keeping a journal for data collecting of the students' learning processes, academic purposes or deep communicative tools between teacher-learner, either in the form of a reflective journal (Hansen-Thomas, 2003), a dialogue journal (Denne-Bolton, 2013; Peyton & Reed, 1990) or a class journal (Young, 2006). What this dissertation wants to stress is the idea of using this resource, as Denne-Bolton (2013) reports, to increase motivation to write, improve fluency in writing, increase students' confidence in writing, help students "develop critical literacy skills, gain autonomy and empowerment as learners, and build communities of learning within the classroom" (Denne-Bolton, 2013, p. 10).

## **4. METHOD**

### **4.1. Participants and context**

This study has been designed to be conducted at Col·legi Lestonnac, a semi-private school in the center of Barcelona that covers all levels of education from 0 years old to 18 years old. This is the center where I completed my 210 hours of teacher training. The participants of this study were going to be:

- 5 AL (English) teachers belonging to the English Department of ESO.
- # students from 1st to 4th of ESO.
- 24 students of 2nd of ESO as participants of the didactic proposal.

At Col·legi Lestonnac, high school students have four sessions of 55 minutes of English per week, and they are split into four groups, according to their skills and level of English (1st group: high performance, 2nd group: mid-performance, 3rd group: mid-low performance, and the 4th one, low performance). The class where the designed unit was intended to be implemented is the second group (mid-performance), with 24 students in the class.

### **4.2. Instruments**

Three types of instruments have been elaborated in order to conduct this study and provide an answer to the objectives. The type of data meant to be collected is quantitative and qualitative, using five interviews, a survey, and the assessment of two compositions.

These instruments would be implemented in different moments. Firstly, the teachers' interviews; secondly, the students' survey; thirdly, a composition before starting the didactic proposal, and finally, another composition after finishing it.

#### 4.2.1. Teachers' interviews

The teachers' interviews would be the first instrument to be implemented, run individually, and in written format. It has been designed to have an in-depth look at education and the English classroom from the point of view of the five Secondary English teachers. The main aim was to acknowledge the role and importance of written expression and creativity in their classes and how they address them.

NAME: GRADE YOU TEACH:	TEACHERS' INTERVIEW ON WRITING
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there any school initiative or program to promote writing skills? Why? Are there any writing skills electives at this school?</li> <li>2. What activities do you do to practice written expression in class? How often? What are the results and the students' perceptions (e.g., do they enjoy them)?</li> <li>3. How would you define 'creativity'? Do you consider yourself a creative person? Why?</li> <li>4. Do you believe creativity is promoted in schools? Why? If so, how?</li> <li>5. Do you think teenagers are creative nowadays? Why?</li> <li>6. Do you think it is possible to determine which grade is more creative in secondary school?</li> <li>7. Do you promote creative writing in your classroom? Why?</li> <li>8. If so, how do you implement it? How often?</li> <li>9. If not, would you like to do it? Through what activities?</li> </ol>

#### 4.2.2. Survey

This second instrument was an online survey with 23 questions, intended to be answered by all ESO students (or as many as it was possible). The main aims were to have a wider range of answers to check their reading, writing routines and other interests, and to analyze the exposure of written input and the needs they might have.

## SURVEY ON CREATIVITY

<b>1. How old are you?</b>	A. 12 B. 13 C. 14 D. 15 E. 16 F. 17
<b>2. Gender?</b>	A. Female B. Male
<b>3. Do you like reading?</b>	A. Yes B. No
<b>4. How often do you read?</b>	A. A lot B. Usually C. Not as much as I wanted to D. When I find the right book E. Never, I don't have time F. Others:
<b>5. What is your favorite genre? (Short answer)</b>	
<b>6. Do you like writing?</b>	A. Yes B. No
<b>7. If you answered YES, what kind of things do you write about? What do you use? (journal, notebook, blog, etc.) (Long answer)</b>	
<b>8. How many writing exercises/tests do you do at school per trimester? (Long answer)</b>	
<b>9. Describe what kind of writing exercises/tests you do. (Long answer)</b>	
<b>10. Do you write freely in class (write about whatever you like)?</b>	A. Yes B. No C. Sometimes
<b>11. Do you think that writing is motivating?</b>	A. Yes B. No C. Sometimes
<b>12. Would you like to take a writing elective (optativa)?</b>	A. Yes B. No C. Maybe
<b>13. If you took it, what would you use it for? (Long answer)</b>	
<b>14. How do you express your thoughts and feelings?</b>	A. Talking to friends B. Talking to my family C. Chatting online D. I write a blog/vlog E. I keep a journal/diary F. I don't usually share my thoughts and feelings with anybody



	G. Others:
<b>15. Would you consider using a journal/diary/blog to write down your thoughts and feelings?</b>	A. Yes B. No C. Maybe
<b>16. How would you define "creativity"?</b> (Long answer)	
<b>17. Do you consider yourself a creative person?</b> (Long answer)	
<b>18. What do you think creative writing is?</b> (Long answer)	
<b>19. Would like to sign up for a writing workshop to improve your writing and explore your creative writing skills?</b>	A. Yes B. No C. Maybe
<b>20. What activities would you suggest to make the workshop fun and useful?</b> (Long answer)	
<b>21. What kind of music do you listen to?</b>	A. Classic B. Country C. Electronic and dance D. Hip hop and rap E. Jazz and blues F. K-pop/J-pop G. Latin H. Metal I. Movie soundtracks J. Pop K. Reggaeton and trap L. Rock M. R&B N. Others:
<b>22. I listen to music when...</b>	A. I do my homework B. I study C. I read D. I am in my bedroom doing my things E. I hang out with my friends F. I am with my family at home G. I am in the car H. Others:
<b>23. In your opinion, listening to music while doing homework, reading or writing is...</b>	A. Distracting/annoying B. Enjoyable C. Motivating D. Relaxing E. Others:

### **4.2.3. Written expression compositions**

This last instrument to be implemented is divided in two. Students would be asked to write a composition at the beginning of the didactic proposal, and another one at the end of it.

Both compositions follow simple prompts, and students must choose one of the five given topics and write about it. The topics vary slightly from the pre-didactic proposal composition and the post-didactic proposal composition because it would be easier for them to revisit the theme and compare both compositions afterward.

The main aim is to verify their level of written expression and to measure the impact and possible improvements in creative writing.

This instrument would be assessed through two rubrics at the end of the didactic proposal, as explained in more detail in the following section.

### **4.3. Assessment**

Due to the current exceptional situation in Spain, it has been impossible to carry out the instruments and the didactic proposal. Even so, I have created different ways of assessment to examine the results I may have obtained.

#### **Teachers' interviews**

As explained above, the interviews with the English teachers were intended to have a look at the methodologies they were using to incorporate writing activities and how creativity was present in their school and inside their classrooms.

All their answers were to be analyzed, highlighted, and shown in a graphic according to each question. The main goals were to check “*What activities do you do to practice written expression in class? How often? What are the results and the students' perceptions (e.g., do they enjoy them?)?*” to get a full picture of the current implementation of the writing curriculum and what tools were used to teach, practice, and reinforce the students' skills. Furthermore, I wanted to check that the “*Do you promote creative writing in your classroom? Why?*” question was carried out somehow.

For this study, the “*Is there any school initiative or program to promote writing skills? Why? Are there any writing skills electives at this school?*” question was important as well because it was impossible to appraise the state of the art and examine what schools in Catalonia are doing.

### **Students' survey**

As for the survey, it was interesting and useful to look over the students' responses as a way to check their opinions on writing, their routines, tastes, and thoughts on nowadays education system. Gathering all the information provided in several charts, I wanted to observe the similar or different patterns all ESO students followed.

### **Students' compositions**

In order to achieve the proposed objectives of the didactic proposal, a qualitative assessment has been designed. Both compositions are assessed using two rubrics: a self-assessment rubric for students to do after the didactic proposal (to compare and self-evaluate their compositions - see *Table 1*), and a composition assessment rubric (it is divided into five evaluation criteria: structure and coherence, focus on the topic, narrative content, vocabulary, and originality - see *Table 2*), used twice, to evaluate both of them.

#### **4.3.1. Rubrics**

- STUDENTS' RUBRIC (self-assessment to compare their written expression compositions)

<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>PARTIALLY</b>	<b>NO</b>
I can see differences between both texts.			
I consider that the second writing is more creative than the first one.			
The second writing contains more details.			
The second writing is more descriptive.			
In the second writing, it was easier to express my ideas. Why? (Long answer)			
I organized my ideas better in the second writing.			
I followed the structures learned during the workshop.			
Explain your creative process for both writings. (Long answer)			

*Table 1*

- TEACHER'S RUBRIC (composition assessment to check if there is a difference or evolution between the pre-didactic proposal composition and post-didactic proposal composition)

Evaluation Criteria	3	2	1
1. To produce written texts following a specific structure (introduction, development, conclusion)	Is not able to produce a coherent written text and the text disorganized.	Is able to write a coherent text, but struggles to use the correct structure.	Can write a perfectly structured and coherent text.
2. To focus on the assigned topic	Does not seem to understand the topic very well, and the text doesn't follow the premises.	Shows a good understanding of the topic and follows some of the premises	Shows a full understanding of the topic and follows the premises correctly.
3. To write a narrative text in an adequate context (fictional text and descriptions)	Does not describe situations and characters correctly.	Is able to write a narrative text but some of the descriptions are simple.	Can make fully detailed descriptions of situations and characters.
4. To use descriptive vocabulary to enrich the text	Does not describe or use the appropriate vocabulary for the text.	Can use descriptive and appropriate vocabulary for the text, but there is a repeated use of it.	Is able to use the vocabulary appropriately to enrich the text.
5. To use originality and inventiveness in the content	Does not show much inventiveness or originality in the text, the text looks bland.	Adds some inventive elements to make the text more creative.	Shows inventiveness and originality through the whole text, producing a very creative text.

Table 2

There is an additional rubric for students after completing the self-assessment rubric. This one serves to give feedback and impressions on the didactic proposal.

FEEDBACK	YES	PARTIALLY	NO
I found the writing activities appealing and entertaining.			
I felt comfortable writing.			
I feel more inspired to write after completing the sessions.			
After doing these activities, do you think it would useful for you to enroll in a writing workshop?			
If so, do you think it would help you develop your creativity?			
I have been able to learn, create, and use more vocabulary.			
Did you find music helpful for writing?			
What is your overall opinion of these sessions? (Long answer)			

Table 3

## 5. THE CREATIVE JOURNAL: a didactic proposal

The idea and development of this didactic proposal came from a personal experience four years ago while I was working at a language school. I started to notice that my students and I needed a small “break” of our two-hour classes, and since we did not have much time to focus on writing, I decided to incorporate a booster. The creative journals became a tangible idea after we had watched and done a small project on the movie *Freedom Writers* (2007). They were touched by the story, and I thought the idea of journals could be a good way to promote written expression. At first, they were hesitant because it meant a lot of writing and time, and they wanted something fresh and different. Because we used to do a lot of creative projects and activities, I mixed the concepts of journal writing and creative freedom (taken from Keri Smith’s *Wreck This Journal*, 2007) and we created a notebook/journal full of wrecked pages and creative writing activities, where they explored various topics and types of exercises (some included in this didactic proposal) and their creativity.

Consequently, after my teaching observation at Col·legi Lestonnac, I could see the same weariness and the need for change in the 2nd of ESO class. Therefore, I decided to try out, update, and adapt to the creative journals according to this class’s needs. They lacked written expression activities; they only did two during my teacher training (one was part of the evaluation of writing skills, and the other was part of an exam).

Grabbing the idea of a journal as a writing medium, this booklet<sup>1</sup> is composed of five dynamic activities where the participants would work individually and collaboratively to complete them. These tasks included in the *creative journal* are focused on the acquisition of different competences with the aim to: (a) enhance writing skills, (b) overcome the fear/boredom of writing and transform it into an entertaining experience, (c) foster autonomous and collaborative skills, and (a) inject motivation and encourage creativity and originality.

The main journal (cover and activities) would not be corrected or assessed, but only the two compositions inside, and the comparison of both would be used to collect data.

The didactic proposal's implementation is divided into six sessions of different time slots (from

<sup>1</sup> Link to the online version of the creative journal: [My creative journal by Anna Corominas Luque](#)

25 minutes to 55 minutes), and the participants would have been 24 students of 2nd of ESO (mid-high performance).

As mentioned in the introduction, the main aim behind this didactic proposal is to engage students, bring them closer to the English language and spark their originality and inventiveness while they learn new techniques to find inspiration and write better.

### **5.1. Learning objectives and competences**

With this didactic proposal, there will be four main objectives to accomplish:

- To use language effectively to write texts in various formats and get familiar with other types of writing and genres.
- To become aware of writing processes in order to structure and organize ideas to create a story or build a character.
- To be able to elicit information from any source and interpret its meaning using a creative process.
- To use vocabulary to produce descriptive and detailed stories.
- To develop self-confidence and creativity in written communication.
- To participate actively, to share opinions and give feedback to other classmates, and work collaboratively.
- To be able to put aside discomfort and overcome the fear of failure to write freely.

The competences promoted are: *oral communicative dimension* (C1: get information and interpret oral texts; C3: use oral interaction strategies to communicate); *reading comprehension dimension* (C4: use comprehension strategies to understand); *written expression dimension* (C7: plan different texts according to its typology; C8: use strategies to produce different text types; C9: revise the text to improve it); and *literary dimension* (C11: value different literary texts).

## **5.2. Methodology**

To achieve these objectives, an effective methodology must be employed to enable significant learning that is flexible and open, and that can be adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of the students, which will favor their capacity to learn by themselves.

It also wants to facilitate students' mastery of the various skills, like written expression and communication, reading comprehension, and oral communication, as well as to activate their prior knowledge and introduce new content and resources to expand it.

Students will be the center of the learning experience, and the teacher will become a facilitator (Grasha, 1996). The role of the teacher will be to guide students to develop their abilities to work autonomously and collaboratively, to take responsibility for their own learning process and self-exploration, as well as to encourage interpersonal communication and interaction in the classroom. The students must perceive that these activities are meaningful and close to their interests, so they would be willing to invest their energy and time, and as a result, it can foster their motivation, imagination, originality, and creativity.

### 5.3. Implementation

#### SESSION 1

<b>ACTIVITY #0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>Present the didactic proposal as part of my MA dissertation paper, explain the objectives and the expectations during these six sessions. Hand in the booklet to the students, and specify that they will not be evaluated for the content of the booklet, and this will not affect their grades.</p> <p>Before starting with the first task, talk about the results of the online survey, and discuss the general answers. Ask if they agree or not with the results.</p> <p>The first task, they will be asked to write a composition using one of the following topics (see <i>Annex 1.3</i>). Check prior knowledge on text structure (introduction, development, and conclusion), and explain again, if necessary. Point out that this composition will be assessed by the teacher for research purposes, once they finish with the sessions.</p> <p><u>TOPICS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The ideal YouTuber</li> <li>● Create the best theme park in the world.</li> <li>● Imagine you are an influencer: what did you do to become popular?</li> <li>● Today was the worst day of your entire life: What happened?<sup>2</sup></li> <li>● Write your autobiography but everything is a lie.</li> </ul> <p>As a home task, they must <u>decorate</u> the cover and back of their journal (for example, like a collage, using magazine/newspaper clippings or printed pictures. There is absolute freedom) to represent things they like, that make them happy, it must be as visual as possible. Show examples on board to give them ideas. See <i>Annex 1.1</i>.</p>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To write a narrative text in an adequate context (fictional text and descriptions)</li> <li>- To follow a specific structure</li> <li>- To use descriptive vocabulary to enrich the text</li> <li>- To use originality and inventiveness</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETENCES &amp; KEY CONTENTS</b>	<p><u>COMPETENCES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Oral communicative dimension</b></li> <li>C1. Get information and interpret oral texts</li> <li>- <b>Written expression dimension</b></li> <li>C7. Plan different texts according to its typology</li> <li>C8. Use strategies to produce different text types</li> </ul> <p><u>KEY CONTENTS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CC1. Oral comprehension</li> <li>CC2. Oral comprehension strategies</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Prompt taken from *Cuadernito de Escritura Divertida, vol. 2* (2018).



	CC11. Written expression planning strategies CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion CC15. Creative production CC20. Pragmatics CC22. Vocabulary and semantics CC23. Morphology and syntax
<b>GROUPING</b>	Individual
<b>TIME</b>	50' - 55'

## SESSION 2

<b>ACTIVITY #1</b>	<b>Last weekend in 4 words</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Working in pairs, each classmate describes her/his weekend in 4 words (these words can be specific (like clues) or non-specific). Then, they must write a short text guessing what the classmate did. Once finished, they share their stories to check and correct. See <i>Annex 1.4</i> .
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To write in a small format</li> <li>- To get all the information, even if it is very little, interpret it to get the full picture, using a creative process</li> <li>- To be specific and concise</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETENCES &amp; KEY CONTENTS</b>	<p><b><u>COMPETENCES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Oral communicative dimension</b></li> <li>C1. Get information and interpret oral texts</li> <li>- <b>Written expression dimension</b></li> <li>C7. Plan different texts according to its typology</li> <li>C8. Use strategies to produce different text types</li> </ul> <p><b><u>KEY CONTENTS</u></b></p> <p>CC1. Oral comprehension CC2. Oral comprehension strategies CC11. Written expression planning strategies CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion CC15. Creative production CC20. Pragmatics CC22. Vocabulary and semantics CC23. Morphology and syntax</p>
<b>GROUPING</b>	Pairs
<b>TIME</b>	20' - 25'

<b>ACTIVITY #2</b>	<b>Meme that!</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	In this activity (see <i>Annex 1.4.</i> ), students pick a random meme or gif out of a bag and they must invent a situation where they would use or have used the meme/gif or a situation that would represent that meme/gif.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To write in a small format</li> <li>- To elicit information from an image and interpret its meaning using a creative process</li> <li>- To be able to elaborate a story with little details/prompts given</li> <li>- To speak freely about personal situations and give feedback to classmates</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETENCES &amp; KEY CONTENTS</b>	<p><b><u>COMPETENCES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Reading comprehension dimension</b></li> <li>C4. Use comprehension strategies to understand</li> <li>- <b>Written expression dimension</b></li> <li>C7. Plan different texts according to its typology</li> <li>C8. Use strategies to produce different text types</li> <li>- <b>Oral communicative dimension</b></li> <li>C3. Use oral interaction strategies to communicate</li> </ul> <p><b><u>KEY CONTENTS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CC4. Oral interaction strategies</li> <li>CC7. Written comprehension</li> <li>CC11. Written expression planning strategies</li> <li>CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion</li> <li>CC15. Creative production</li> <li>CC20. Pragmatics</li> <li>CC22. Vocabulary and semantics</li> </ul>
<b>GROUPING</b>	Individual (write the situation) Whole groups (sharing of writings and experiences)
<b>TIME</b>	10' - 15'

**Note:**

This activity tries to combine creative writing, self-expression, and emotions, with a touch of social media. In this activity, students use popular memes and gifs; memes and gifs have become a tool to express how we feel or represent our status in a fun way.

There are two ways of doing this activity: students choosing the meme/gif or the teacher selecting them randomly, besides, there are two phases: firstly, each student are given one, and they must write a situation where they would use/have used it or a situation that would represent that meme/gif. And, secondly, they share their answers with the whole class and exchange impressions or anecdotes, giving them the opportunity to give feedback to other classmates and talk about real situations where they have used them, or they would do so. In this second phase, we want students to improvise while practicing their speaking skills, and be creators of their

language (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998).

Students’ agency is really important for teachers to take into account in class to find activities where students are able to improvise, use their oral skills, as well as, express their personal and emotional experiences (Lagerwaard, 2020: forthcoming).

As a follow-up project, they could create a sort of meme/gif blog (such as Tumblr or Twitter, or another social media network they are familiar with) where they could upload their favorite ones along with a short text on how they are feeling and why they have chosen that meme/gif to represent that.

### SESSION 3

<b>ACTIVITY #3</b>	<b>Musical mood board</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>This activity (see <i>Annex 1.5.</i> + <i>Annex 1.6.</i>) consists of listening to five different songs (three are instrumental (movie soundtracks from different genres) and using music as vehicle and inspiration to create a story (mood, setting, character, and plot). Previously, the teacher introduces and explains these concepts to check prior knowledge on how to create a story and the elements to incorporate in it.</p> <p><b>SONG 1 (0:41' - <i>Monaco Drive</i>):</b> Students must write what spring to their minds when listening to the song. It must be words, such as concepts, emotions, places, etc. For example, “sadness, broken heart, city”.</p> <p><b>SONG 2 (1:18' - <i>Severine</i>):</b> Students must create a setting with a short sentence. For example, “New York City in a rainy afternoon” or “A small rustic town in the countryside, in 1965”.</p> <p><b>SONG 3 (1:41' - <i>Générique du fin</i>):</b> Students must write a brief description of a character, including the following prompts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. name</li> <li>2. age</li> <li>3. birthplace/place of residence</li> <li>4. physical description/personality traits</li> <li>5. job / activity</li> </ol> <p><b>SONG 4 (2:59' - <i>Sue Me</i>):</b> Students must write a 3-line story about their character, what she/he is doing, or explain something personal about her/him.</p> <p><b>SONG 5 (2:33' - <i>Stormy</i>):</b> Students must write a 5-line plot using all the information about their character and creating a new setting.</p> <p><b>EXTRA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As post-exercise after this activity, students could choose a song and write a one-page story, using their character as the main protagonist.</li> <li>- As a pre-exercise before this activity, to set the mood, prepare and engage the students for the music activity, the teacher could create a “Name the Movie</li> </ul>

	<p>Challenge” game (listening to soundtrack scores), where the students, in groups, must listen to few seconds of a song and guess the movie it belongs to.</p> <p>ICT RESOURCE: <i>Spotify</i>. Original playlist, retrieved from <a href="https://open.spotify.com/playlist/71uRjKQUxTIOG29XmvqS2e?si=bjb6rR6yQVakRWWUZx-Ow">https://open.spotify.com/playlist/71uRjKQUxTIOG29XmvqS2e?si=bjb6rR6yQVakRWWUZx-Ow</a></p>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To learn how to create characters from scratch</li> <li>- To learn how to organize ideas to create a story/character</li> <li>- To create original texts by using music as an information source/filter</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETENCES &amp; KEY CONTENTS</b>	<p><b><u>COMPETENCES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Written expression dimension</b></li> </ul> <p>C7. Plan different texts according to its typology C8. Use strategies to produce different text types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Literary dimension</b></li> </ul> <p>C11. Value different literary texts</p> <p><b><u>KEY CONTENTS</u></b></p> <p>CC11. Written expression planning strategies CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion CC15. Creative production CC18. Oral interpretation, out loud reading, recitation, singing and representation CC20. Pragmatics CC22. Vocabulary and semantics CC23. Morphology and syntax</p>
<b>GROUPING</b>	<p>Individual (activities) Group work (when sharing ideas)</p>
<b>TIME</b>	50' - 55'

**Note:**

This activity is very special to me because I firmly believe that music is able to change people’s moods and can inspire and influence writing. So I wanted to incorporate an activity like this to prove so and see how students would respond. That is the reason why I included three questions about music in the students’ survey, to see how they use music and in which actions of their lives is applied.

I was surprisingly pleased to find three studies that analyzed the effects of music on people’s arousal and mood (Thompson et al., 2001), on creative writing (Pugh, 2014) and on writing fluency and quality (Aryanto, 2016).

On *Arousal, Mood and the Mozart Effect*, Thompson et al. (2001) confirm that this kind of

stimuli (music) can affect and increase positively the levels of arousal, and therefore, it shows improvements when doing a task.

Pugh (2014) was able to prove that music could certainly affect the quality and content of creative writing, considering that music helps people get immersed in different mindset, describing it as a “very valuable and powerful thing.” (p. 172). Creative writing is influenced by the stimuli of music because there are deep thoughts and emotion, entailed in the writing process.

Even though Aryanto (2016) stated that background music hadn’t any effect on the writing fluency and writing quality (in his study, participants were exposed to four types of music: silence, instrumental music, English lyric music, and music in a foreign language (p. 28), while they were writing an academic essay). He also admitted that music has a slightly “significant relationship” with the quality of writing, but not its fluency, proving that music could have a “transfer effect to the linguistic domain.” (p.45)

This activity firmly conveys the use of music as a source of inspiration, for this reason, students’ feedback on this particular exercise would have been useful to witness if music can influence writing, if it could have had an impact on their stories. Pugh (2014) also points out that it can music can be mostly helpful during the process of brainstorming.

#### SESSION 4

<b>ACTIVITY #4</b>	<b>Scrabbling my story</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>In groups of 3 members, students will work collaboratively to play <i>Scrabble</i> by using the teacher’s topic suggestions (see <i>Annex 1.6. + Annex 1.7.</i>). They must write a word related to the topic, and then, pass the journal to the person next to them, so the classmate will have to add a new word, using one of the letters of the previous word, and so on.</p> <p>After one round (three minutes to complete the task), students collect their journals and they must create a story using all the words on the page.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Topic: the beach</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S HOLIDAYS N S PADDLESURF N</p>

	<b>POSSIBLE TOPICS:</b> - Movie theater - Rainy Sunday - At the shopping mall
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	- To use vocabulary to produce a descriptive and detailed story - To improve and expand vocabulary
<b>COMPETENCES &amp; KEY CONTENTS</b>	<b>COMPETENCES</b> - <b>Written expression dimension</b> C7. Plan different texts according to its typology C8. Use strategies to produce different text types  <b>KEY CONTENTS</b> CC11. Written expression planning strategies CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion CC15. Creative production CC20. Pragmatics CC22. Vocabulary and semantics CC23. Morphology and syntax
<b>GROUPING</b>	Groups of 5 ( <i>Scrabble</i> game) Individual (story)
<b>TIME</b>	25' - 30'

## SESSION 5

<b>ACTIVITY #5</b>	<b>Guess the movie plot</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Teacher provides students with a very descriptive script of a trailer, including all the sounds. In groups of three, they must analyze the script and its key elements in order to write the movie plot. (See <i>Annex 1.7. + Annex 1.8.</i> )  <b>EXTRA:</b> After the activity, show each trailer so they can check if they got the genre and story right.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	- To interpret a text with a specific structure and elicit all the information possible from it in order to produce a story - To get familiar with other types of writing and genres - To use strategies to organize ideas - To make descriptions (using adequate vocabulary and adjectives)
<b>COMPETENCES</b>	<b>COMPETENCES</b> - <b>Reading comprehension dimension</b> C4. Use comprehension strategies to understand  - <b>Written expression dimension</b> C7. Plan different texts according to its typology C8. Use strategies to produce different text types

	<p>C9. Revise the text to improve it</p> <p>- <b>Literary dimension</b></p> <p>C11. Value different literary texts</p> <p><b><u>KEY CONTENTS</u></b></p> <p>CC7: Written comprehension</p> <p>CC8. Written comprehension strategies</p> <p>CC9. Search and management of information</p> <p>CC11. Written expression planning strategies</p> <p>CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion</p> <p>CC13. Revision, correction, reparation and presentation strategies</p> <p>CC15. Creative production</p> <p>CC16. Dictionary use</p> <p>CC17. Oral, written and audio-visual literary texts</p> <p>CC18. Oral interpretation, out loud reading, recitation, singing and representation</p> <p>CC20. Pragmatics</p> <p>CC22. Vocabulary and semantics</p> <p>CC23. Morphology and syntax</p>
<b>GROUPING</b>	Groups of 3 members
<b>TIME</b>	40' - 55'

## SESSION 6

<b>ACTIVITY #6</b>	<b>CLOSURE</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>After completing all the journal, they will be asked to do a final task. Remind them of the initial composition they did on the first session. This time the premises are the same (text structure, cohesion, coherence) but the topics are slightly different. It is important to stress that this final composition, along with the first one, will be assessed by the teacher for research purposes, and by them, using a self-assessment rubric to compare both. (See <i>Annex 1.8.</i> + <i>Annex 1.9.</i>)</p> <p>TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The worst YouTuber.</li> <li>● Create the best shopping mall in the world.</li> <li>● Imagine you are a CEO of your favorite brand and you are looking for influencers.</li> <li>● Today was the best day of your entire life: What happened?</li> <li>● Write your biography of a member of your family/friend, but everything is a lie.</li> </ul>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	- To write a narrative text in an adequate context (fictional text and descriptions)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To follow a specific structure</li> <li>- To use descriptive vocabulary to enrich the text</li> <li>- To use originality and inventiveness</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETENCES &amp; KEY CONTENTS</b>	<p><b><u>COMPETENCES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Written expression dimension</b></li> </ul> <p>C7. Plan different texts according to its typology  C8. Use strategies to produce different text types</p> <p><b><u>KEY CONTENTS</u></b></p> <p>CC11. Written expression planning strategies  CC12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion  CC15. Creative production  CC20. Pragmatics  CC22. Vocabulary and semantics  CC23. Morphology and syntax</p>
<b>GROUPING</b>	Individual
<b>TIME</b>	50' - 55'



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The motivation for this research study, as mentioned in the didactic proposal, comes from personal experience. Having daily contact with students and build student-teacher relationships is part of my teaching style, they inspire me to create activities that meet their needs and interests. Moreover, my mission is to help them thrive and succeed, improve their skills, and make them see their own potential.

Unfortunately, the following conclusions are not based on tested results, but in the data that would have been gathered. Due to the limitations of the current situation, specifically in Catalonia, it has been impossible to implement any of the instruments or the didactic proposal.

This study has been designed to answer different questions that arose from the research problem: students' lack of motivation is increasing, creativity is not taken into consideration in schools, and writing is not encouraged enough in class, making students see it as a tedious and intimidating task. How can we motivate students to write? The suggestion of this study is to do it through creative writing.

While creating the research study, I wanted to support other studies to bring importance to the design of the didactic proposal. This paper begins with a short review of the theoretical framework regarding the role of creativity in education, the writing task in the English class, the benefits of creative writing, and as an additional point, the use of journals as a writing medium.

After checking how creative writing helps to improve aspects of the student's development, both academically and personally, a didactic proposal was made that would be attractive to the students, and that would combine creativity, enjoyment, and total freedom to write what they wanted. We often expose our students to write what we want, or what the curriculum requires, following predetermined guidelines, leaving room for imagination and limiting the authentic expression of feelings, and real opinions.

Since the instruments and the didactic proposal could not be carried out, it has not been possible to answer the research questions or the objectives with accurate results. The instruments were crucial for having a global vision of how writing is approached in the classroom, and if schools provide opportunities to exploit creativity. We will now try to answer the objectives set through theoretical research and the instruments that would have been used.

**Objective 1:** To inquire into teachers' and students' habits and perceptions of creativity and creative writing.

The students' survey was intended to expose their routines regarding reading, music (the Song activity in Session 3 could check if music was able to influence their writing, like Pugh (2014) tested), and especially, writing, to get to know their interests and routines to have some guidelines when preparing the didactic proposal.

Both in the survey and the teachers' interviews, I asked them, "*How would you define 'creativity'?*" and "*Do you consider yourself a creative person? Why?*" to see their perceptions of creativity and the effects it might have on their personal and school life, and it was useful for introducing creative writing and being aware of it.

Question 5 "*Do you think teenagers are creative nowadays? Why?*" and question 6, "*Do you think it is possible to determine which grade is more creative in secondary school?*", in the teachers' interviews was also key to check their vision of their students and delve into the role of creativity in Secondary education.

**Objective 2:** To check the role and exposure to writing processes in the English curriculum.

It was essential to be able to respond to this objective in order to have a basis on which to build the study and the consequent didactic proposal. Both teachers and students were asked how much time was devoted to writing, how this activity was approached, what kind of exercises were done in class, and what the results of writing practice were.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the writing task is not pleasant to students, who usually face it with anxiety and insecurities (Mathers, 2005; Brittain, 2019). I found during my teacher training at Col·legi Lestonnac that when students (from 1st of ESO to 4th of ESO) had to take a writing test or do a prompt activity, they showed signs of boredom, lack of interest and concern.

It also is shown by Hamp-Lyons and Heasley (2006) that writing is the last skill to be developed, putting forward and therefore giving more importance to speaking, reading, and listening in the acquisition of the language. On that note, during my teaching observation, I also saw that writing activities were presented as a mandatory skill to be assessed within the

curriculum, sometimes presented as a mere activity to check skills, which made the task even more imposed and purposeless for the students.

**Objectives 3 and 4:** To explore the impact of creative writing on the development of written expression and motivation among students + To measure the improvement of written expression and creativity by analyzing students' compositions before and after the didactic proposal.

This objective has been successfully answered through the theoretical framework, with the help of several studies that have highlighted the benefits that creative writing can bring to the English classroom, and above all, to student's growth.

Maley's work (Peachey & Maley, 2015) is noteworthy; his strategies have served as an inspiration to outline the didactic proposal's methodology and establish some guidelines to follow in my future teaching.

The evaluation of the written expression compositions and the students' feedback would have also have supported the impact and possible improvement in written expression and motivation. Although the results of the writing were qualitative and not graded, they wanted to determine the degree of improvement in aspects such as structure, adequacy, focus, use of vocabulary, and originality.

**Objective 5:** To suggest the incorporation of creative writing as a regular activity in the English classroom.

This objective served as a conclusion and closure to the study, supported by the results obtained from the students' compositions and feedback. In essence, it was significant to be able to show with results that creative writing could make a difference in the development of the student and benefit them, not only for the acquisition of the additional language but for personal growth. At the same time, as a teacher but also as a MA student, I wanted to show my training tutor and other teachers ways to motivate students, how to make students see writing as a fun task, encourage them to explore and create their own language (Lutzer, 2015), to feel free to express their opinions and emotions.

Overall, the results that would have been obtained are only representative of the school where the study and data gathering were to be carried out, and not a global vision of the education system. It was impossible to appraise the state of the art and examine what schools in Catalonia were doing to address writing and creativity. I would like to insist in the fact that all the instruments and the didactic proposal would have given a different dimension to the conclusion of this present research study because they would have highlighted, in my honest opinion, the importance and need of creativity in education, and how creative written expression can enhance motivation and empower, yet again, students' potential and perspective of the main task.

I was able to test out the creative journals four years ago, and some activities mentioned within the didactic proposal (Activities 2, 3 and 4), with various groups of age and levels, and they worked out surprisingly well, students were very receptive, and the results were optimal. The motivation was boosted, and they asked for more activities like those in the following sessions.

A possible way to improve this research study would involve testing the didactic proposal in the other performance levels. The didactic proposal was designed for a 2nd of ESO class (mid-high performance), while the online survey was available for all ESO students. Therefore, it would also be interesting to analyze the results of all groups to see possible differences and responses.

Since it could not offer any new findings as a contribution to the role of creative writing, as many other authors have already done, this study aims to present a series of activities for other teachers to put into the test as well as the assessment rubrics as support.

In conclusion, this research study has been an enjoyable journey of discovery. The result has been the creation of a dynamic and approachable proposal that has tried to integrate different competences in a way that can be interesting and engaging to adolescents and adapted for other different age groups.

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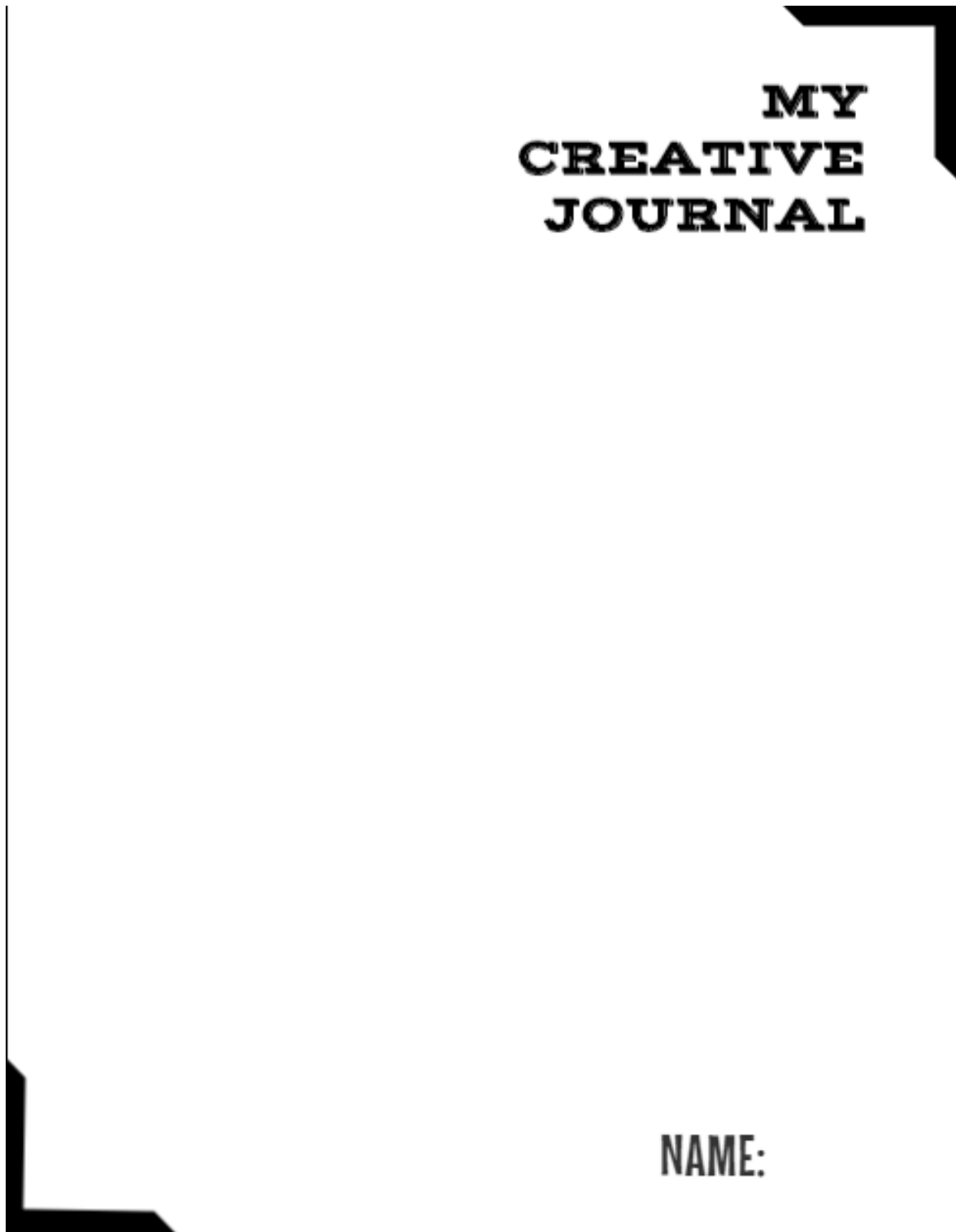
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## 8. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Creative journal (created with Flipsnack)

Annex 1.1. COVER





**hi.**

How are you? I hope you're doing great. Firstly, thank you so much for helping me out. It means a lot! I am sure we are going to have so much fun together.

In this small journal, you will find some activities to let your imagination run wild, to be creative, to be yourself. I truly believe there is a writer in you, and this creative journal wants to help you discover and power up your potential.

All you need is a pencil, a pen and an eraser, because there is no success without tons of mistakes.

Shall we?

Anna,

!

**my creative journal**

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## Annex 1.3. PRE-DIDACTIC PROPOSAL COMPOSITION

"The scariest moment is just before you start.  
After that, things can only get better."

- Stephen King

### LET'S GET STARTED ;-)

This is very simple. I want you to write about one of the topics below. Write as much as you want, but please, no less than 150 words. Have fun!

#### CHOOSE ONE

- The Ideal YouTuber
- Create the best theme park of the world.
- Imagine you are an influencer: what did you do to become popular?
- Today was the worst day of your entire life. What happened?
- Write your autobiography but everything is a lie.

"To me, writing is fun. It doesn't matter what you're writing, as long as you can tell a story."

- Stan Lee

2

3

## Annex 1.4. ACTIVITY 1 AND ACTIVITY 2

"The goal isn't to live forever, the goal is to create something that will."

- Chuck Palahniuk  
*Diary*

### LAST WEEKEND IN 4 WORDS

STEP 1: What did you do last weekend? Was it fun or boring? Did you go somewhere? Did you hang out with your friends? Well, EXPLAIN it to the classmate next to you, but ONLY in 4 WORDS.

STEP 2: Now it's your turn. Write and guess your classmate's weekend with the 4 words s//he said to you.

"Fear doesn't shut you down; it wakes you up."

- Veronica Roth  
*Divergent*

### MEME THAT!

Have you picked a meme/gif? Glue it here!



Now, write a situation where you would use/have used it or a situation that would represent that meme/gif. Once you finish, share it with the rest of the class.

4

5

"We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better."

- J. K. Rowling

### MUSICAL MOOD BOARD

You are going to listen to 5 SONGS and let your imagination and pen flow on the paper. When you finish this exercise, you will have created the beginning of a great story. Before you close your eyes and enjoy the music, let's see if you are familiar with these terms.

- MOOD:
- SETTING:
- CHARACTER:
- PLOT:

Ready? Let's make history!

### SONG 1 - MOOD

Instructions: Write whatever comes to your mind, using just words, like adjectives, emotions, places, objects, etc.

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"If you don't imagine, nothing ever happens at all."

- John Green  
*Paper Towns*

### MUSICAL MOOD BOARD

#### SONG 2 - SETTING

Instructions: Invent a setting where your story takes place by writing a short sentence.

#### SONG 3 - CHARACTER

Instructions: Write a small description of the main character of your story. You must include: name, age, birthplace/place of residence, physical description/personality traits, and job/activity.

7

"Sometimes you can do everything right and things will still go wrong, the key is to never stop doing right."

-Angie Thomas  
*The Hate U Give*

### MUSICAL MOOD BOARD

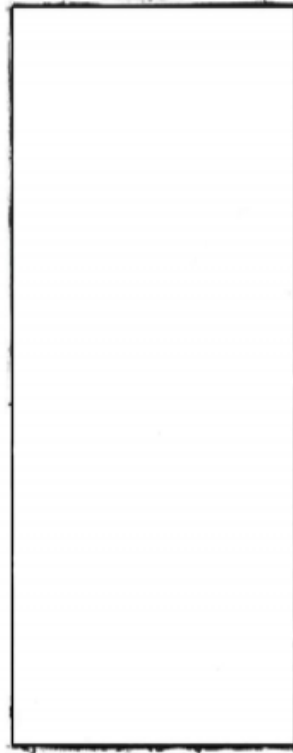
#### SONG 4 - MINI STORY

Instructions: Write 3-line story about your character, what s/he is doing or explain something personal about her/him.



#### SONG 5 - MINI PLOT

Instructions: Write a 5-line plot of your story, using all the information about your character and creating a new setting.



8

"When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."

-Paulo Coelho  
*The Alchemist*

### SCRABBLING MY STORY

Do you know Scrabble? We all are going to play it now! You must write a word related to the topic on your journal, then, pass it to the person next to you. Your groups had 3 minutes to complete the task. Remember that you must write your word using ONE of the letters of the previous words, just like Scrabble! When the 3 minutes pass, collect your journal and create a story using ALL and ONLY the words on the page.

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## Annex 1.7. ACTIVITY 4 AND ACTIVITY 5

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

- Toni Morrison

### SCRABBLING MY STORY

"If you can dream it, you can do it."

- Walt Disney

### GUESS THE MOVIE PLOT

**SPOILER ALERT!** Sometimes the trailer says it all about the movie. So now, it is going to be a bit tricky. Your group and you will have a super detailed script of a trailer. Use all your senses, analyze it so you can write what the movie is about!

### **NOTES**

glue the script here

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11

## Annex 1.8. ACTIVITY 5 AND POST-DIDACTIC PROPOSAL COMPOSITION

"To choose to write is to reject silence."  
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

"Writing is like a sport. If you don't practice, you don't get any better."  
- Rick Riordan

### LET'S GET FINISHED :-)

This is the end. What a journey! Remember how we started? Well, let's get it done the same way with a twist. Choose one of the topics below. Write as much as you want, but please, no less than 150 words. Have fun!

#### CHOOSE ONE

- The worst YouTuber.
- Create the best shopping mall of the world.
- Imagine you are a CEO of your favorite brand and you are looking for influencers.
- Today was the best day of your entire life. What happened?
- Write your biography of a member of your family/friend but everything is a lie.

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## Annex 1.9. POST-DIDACTIC PROPOSAL COMPOSITION

"It's the imperfections that make things beautiful."

- Jenny Han  
*The Summer I Turned Pretty*

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**ANNEX 2:** Survey for ESO. students on creativity, writing practice, interests and routines.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7ezCuZd1inmVXudqnSqilq2AyTBv5UNvWI9c9qgiDyBnvXQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7ezCuZd1inmVXudqnSqilq2AyTBv5UNvWI9c9qgiDyBnvXQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

**ANNEX 3:** Link to the Spotify playlist created by me for the music exercise, during the didactic proposal (Session 3).

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/71uRjKQUxTIOG29XmvqS2e?si=bjb6rR6yQVaokRWWUZx-Ow>