

The development of cyberliterary texts in English

O desenvolvimento de textos ciberliterários em inglês

El desarrollo de textos ciberliterarios en inglés

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RESUMO: A Escrita Criativa Digital (ECD) não tem sido extensivamente pesquisada no Brasil. Há poucos cursos sobre ECD em universidades brasileiras de Letras, e ainda menos publicações disponíveis nesta área (BLYTHE; SWEET, 2008; HEALEY, 2009; MORLEY, 2007; MYERS, 2006; OBERHOLZER, 2014). A Lei de Diretrizes e Bases Educacionais do Brasil (LDB), Lei 9.394/96, valoriza a educação e as culturas nacionais. Sendo assim, a multimodalidade (HODGES; KRESS, 1998) se torna parte desta valorização. Além disso, a multimodalidade, o multiletramento e a multidisciplinaridade/transdisciplinaridade são também reforçadas pelos Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (PCNs) de 1998 (BARRETTO, 1995; BONAMINO; SOUSA, 2012; SANTOS, 2002). Entretanto, poucas universidades brasileiras aprovam aos seus alunos de graduação, não somente de Letras, com disciplinas para que eles possam desenvolver textos multimodais tais como as fanfictions. Por essas razões, um curso de Escrita Criativa Fanfictional em inglês (ECFI) foi desenvolvido e ministrado na USP no final de 2016. Este curso teve 5 participantes, todos estudantes de graduação em Letras da USP. Os objetivos do curso de ECFI e, também, desta pesquisa foram auxiliar seus participantes a desenvolver textos ciberliterários. A metodologia desta pesquisa envolveu a organização e o ensino da Escrita Criativa Fanfictional em inglês em um curso extracurricular na USP. Para alcançar os objetivos desta pesquisa, a organização deste curso foi baseada na teoria sociocultural vygotskiana (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007). Os dados coletados indicaram que a estudante da ECFI desenvolveu tanto conceitos sobre multimodalidade quanto seus textos ciberliterários.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Escrita Criativa. Teoria sociocultural. Fanfiction.

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ABSTRACT: The Digital Creative Writing (DCW) has not been extensively researched in Brazil. There are few courses on DCW in Brazilian Universities, and even fewer publications available in this area (BLYTHE; SWEET, 2008; HEALEY, 2009; MORLEY, 2007; MYERS, 2006; OBERHOLZER, 2014). The Law on Educational Guidelines and Bases of Brazil (LDB, in Portuguese), Law 9.394/96, values education and national cultures. Thus, multimodality (HODGES; KESS, 1998) becomes part of this valuation. In addition, multimodality, multiliteracy and multidisciplinary/transdisciplinarity are also reinforced by the 1998 National Curricular Parameters (BARRETTO, 1995; BONAMINO; SOUSA, 2012; SANTOS, 2002). However, few Brazilian universities provide their undergraduate students with subjects that they can help them develop multimodal texts such as fanfictions. For these reasons, a Fanfictional Creative Writing in English (FCW) course was developed and taught at USP at the end of 2016. This course had 5 participants, all USP undergraduate students. The objectives of the FCW course were mainly to help its participants develop cyberliterary texts. The methodology of this research was a case study (DUFF, 2008). Thus, it was a qualitative approach to understanding the various aspects of the chosen research-questions. To answer these questions, the teacher-researcher organized and taught the FCW. The FCW course was based on the Vygotskian sociocultural theory (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007). The collected data indicated that the FCW student may have developed both multimodality concepts as well as cyberliterary texts.

KEYWORDS: Creative Writing. Sociocultural theory. Fanfiction.

RESUMEN: La Escritura Creativa Digital (ECD) no ha sido ampliamente investigada en Brasil. Hay pocos cursos sobre ECD en universidades brasileñas de Lenguajes, y aún menos publicaciones disponibles en esta área (BLYTHE; SWEET, 2008; HEALEY, 2009; MORLEY, 2007; MYERS, 2006; OBERHOLZER, 2014). La Ley de Directrices y Bases Educativas de Brasil (LDB), Ley 9.394/96, valora la educación y las culturas nacionales. Siendo así, la multimodalidad (HODGES; KRESS, 1998) se convierte en parte de esta valoración. Además, la multimodalidad, el multiletramento y la multidisciplinaria / transdisciplinaria son también reforzadas por los Parámetros Curriculares Nacionales de 1998 (BARRETTO, 1995; BONAMINO; SOUSA, 2012; SANTOS, 2002). Sin embargo, pocas universidades brasileñas brindan a sus alumnos de graduación, no sólo de Letras, de disciplinas para que ellos puedan desarrollar textos multimodales tales como fanfictions. Por estas razones, un curso de Escritura Creativa Fanfictional en inglés (ECFI) fue desarrollado y brindado en la USP a finales de 2016. Este curso tuvo 5 participantes, todos estudiantes de graduación en Lenguajes de la USP. Los objetivos del curso de ECFI y, también, de esta investigación fueron ayudar a sus participantes a desarrollar textos ciberliterarios. La metodología de esta investigación involucró la organización y la enseñanza de la Escritura Creativa Fanfictional en inglés en un curso extracurricular en la USP. Para alcanzar los objetivos de esta investigación, la organización de este curso se basó en la teoría sociocultural vygotskiana (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007). Los datos recolectados indicaron que la estudiante de la ECFI desarrolló tanto conceptos sobre multimodalidad como sus textos ciberliterarios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Escritura Creativa. Teoría sociocultural. Fanfiction.

Introduction

Digital Creative Writing (DCW) in English has not been extensively researched in Brazil (FERRARI, 2002; REIS, 2017). There are few courses on DCW in Brazilian Languages and Literatures universities, and even fewer available publications on this area as well (BLYTHE; SWEET, 2008; HEALEY, 2009; MORLEY, 2007; MYERS, 2006; OBERHOLZER, 2014). The Brazilian Law of Directives and Bases (Law 9.394/96) (BRASIL, 2010), indicates that creativity should be comprehended as one of the main foundations of Brazilian education, from the primary schooling to the tertiary level. However, there are few courses in Brazil which promote creative writing classes and even fewer which promote the cyberliterary creative writing classes.

To communicate effectively in today's world is one of the most high-ranking skills required by schools, workplaces and even the internet (WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, 2015). Therefore, to teach students how to communicate successfully, teachers may resort to the Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Thus, they can identify and select activities which can improve their students' creativity, self-expression, imagination (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007), conceptual thinking (LANTOLF, 2015), self-regulation as well as agency (WERTSCH, 2008). One possible way of achieving that is by cyberliterary creative writing classes, which is the focus of this article.

According to Vygotsky (2007), every cognitive activity materializes in a type of matrix. This matrix is socially and historically constructed and, consequently, it shapes sociohistorical artifacts. In other words, still for Vygotsky (2007), the human cognitive qualities and how people think are not defined by innate factors, but they are direct artifacts from our social institutions. These social institutions are based on recurrent activities which form people's cultures. Furthermore, Vygotsky (2007) attested that although culture may change throughout history, many of its fundamental characteristics pass from one generation to another.

Cyberliterary creative writing has been one of these cognitive activities.

Conforming to Myers (2006), the demand for creative writing courses has increased exponentially since 1990 in universities worldwide. He believed that this has happened due to the constant valorization of writing in our society. For Myers (2006), writing was not simply a commodity anymore, but it has become a social necessity. By social necessity, he meant that people have felt more and more the incessant urges to express themselves. This can be verified on the fandom Wattpad (2019). Wattpad (2019) is a website where budding writers can publish their stories, especially fanfictions. According to its moderators, they publish more than 1 million fanfictions per day.

The Objectives of this Study Case

The main objective of this study case was to identify if the Fanfictional Creative Writing course in English (FCW) could help the participating student develop her cyberliterary texts. To achieve that, a previous research-question had to be made so that the researcher could verify if the FCW student was able to identify and elaborate on the recurrent concepts about cyberliterary texts. Therefore, the main 2 research-questions of this study case were indicated as follows:

- 1 – Can the FCW student identify and explain cyberliterary texts?
- 2 – Can the FCW course help student A develop her cyberliterary texts under Vygotskian perspective?

The Genre *Fanfiction*: a Possible Approach

Since the advent of the internet, fanfictions have become gradually more popular. Several researchers (JENKINS, 1992; PUGH, 2010; THOMAS, 2006; TUSHNET, 1997) have indicated that fanfictions entail 1) fictional texts created by fans based on “original” contents, 2) connections between the fanwriting and

the popular culture, 3) writers who do not usually seek for financial recognition, 4) writers who usually write to fulfill their innermost needs and 5) texts which challenge canonical stories (here understood as the "original" content). Thus, these characteristics can be identified as the classic conceptualization of fanfictions.

One of the first theorists to conceptualize fanfictions, Henry Jenkins (1992), initially stated that fanwriting (a possible synonym for fanfictions) is a type of text composed by the ficwriters (writers of fanfictions) to be read, published and commented on a fandom (online fan community). In fact, this has been one of the most current definitions for fanfictions. In addition, Jenkins (1992) noticed that fanfictions are good examples of media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence.

In relation to the media convergence, Jenkins (1992, p. 12) purported that there was a "[...] *flow of content across multiple media platforms*". Furthermore, he claimed that this flow has established various types of cooperation among multiple media industries (TV, Radio, Internet, etc.). Similarly, Jenkins (1992) believed that the fandom cooperation may face a set of debatable inquiries related to practicality and identity. As a result, the fandom audience may be virtually limitless. In other words, in the world of media convergence, all the stories may have "equitable" opportunities of being written, divulged and read. On the other hand, this posed another set of debatable inquiries such as readability, accessibility, relatability and feasibility.

In relation to the participatory culture, Jenkins (1992, p. 13) stressed that it "[...] *contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other*". In addition, Pugh (2010) indicated that this type of interaction may happen based on clear and unclear set of rules. One of the clear rules is consumption, which has become a collective process. In a consumer world, people have many opportunities of purchases.

However, the classic conceptualization of fanfictions (JENKINS, 1992; PUGH, 2010; THOMAS, 2006; TUSHNET, 1997) can be easily applied to the conceptualization of fanzines, which are also texts written by fans. In fact, all these authors' definitions can be applied to fanzines. Therefore, based on their classic concepts: what ficwriters write are fanzines and not fanfictions. In contrast, to be considered fanfictions, the fanwriting should have been written to be consumed on the internet. That is, fanfictions must entail digital scripts (digital pictures, memes, gifs, etc.) as a constitutive part of their fanwriting. This is the modern conceptualization of fanfictions.

The Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory

For Vygotsky (2004, 2007), creativity is a process that entails children's play, imagination and self-expression. Creativity is a quite relevant concept for English as a second language (ESL, henceforth) teachers to better understand the digital creative writing processes. Furthermore, it can help teachers promote their students' zone of proximal development (ZPD, henceforth) (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007). Hence, according to Vygotsky (2007, p. 10), the first step for developing creativity is during the early play. In this stage, children start investigating and playing with the world around them. Nevertheless, their play does not remain the same, inflexible.

The more the children play, the more they change their playing. Therefore, children's play is a process which changes constantly throughout their childhood. According to (LEV..., 2004, p. 11), "*A child's play very often is just an echo of what he saw and heard adults do*" [...]. However, he highlighted that this is not "[...] *simply a reproduction of what he has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he has acquired*". The children then fuse these elements to create their own reality, the "[...] *one that conforms [their] own needs and desires*" (LEV..., 2004, p. 11-12).

Although Vygotsky (2004, 2007) focused on the child's development, development can happen throughout a person's lifespan. Therefore, the

Vygotskian sociocultural theory can also be applied to promote teenagers and adults' development. According to Vygotsky (2004, 2007), human development cannot be separated from its social and cultural context. Thusly, if you want to understand the various human mental processes, you must understand Vygotsky's concepts of mediation. For Vygotsky (2007), artifacts are tools used to mediate people's psychological development. Consequently, this may help people develop their agency.

For the neo-Vygotskians such as Wertsch (2008), agency is related to appropriateness, which can result in people's self-regulation. He attested that the social interactions play an important role in people's self-regulation development. Still for Wertsch (2008, p. 33), people can become agents of their own development if they become conscious of "[...] *socially approved behaviors*". Wertsch (2008, p. 35) then highlighted that a person's consciousness may be materialized through a set of social interactions between a more skillful peer and a less one.

In addition, Wertsch (2008) pinpointed that confidence may be a sign of development, because it is related to agency. A person may show confidence because he/she knows how to use a certain artifact. Therefore, he/she may now be a skillful peer. A more skillful peer may provide the other regulation needed for a less one to perform a task and, maybe, achieve self-regulation. According to Wertsch (2008), self-regulation is another sign of development.

For Vygotsky (2007), object regulation means that people's education is directly mediated by learning objects and physical arrangements. Other regulation means that one group member can make attempts to regulate the group in which he or she is involved. In turn, self-regulation means that people have achieved learning maturity and can construe as well as change their environment. As a result, people can show more signs of confidence for achieving learning maturity.

One more important characteristic of development was indicated by another neo-Vygotskians, Lantolf (2015). For this author, teachers should be able to differentiate empirical from conceptual thinking to better identify their

students' development. According to Lantolf (2015), empirical thinking entails one's perception of recurrent features related to an object or event to organize them in distinctive groups and/or to classify them hierarchically. In turn, conceptual thinking entails one's more profound comprehension of an object or event's intrinsic features, its various relationships and genesis constructions. Therefore, conceptual thinking can provide students with a more holistic understanding of an object or event.

Methodology

This research was construed upon the case study methodology (DUFF, 2008, 2012; DYSON; GENISHI, 2005; STAKE, 2006). For Duff (2008), a case study could be apprehended as a qualitative approach to understanding the various aspects of a certain research-question such as experiences, behaviors, characteristics as well as processes related to this research-question. These research-questions are: 1) *Can the FCW student identify and explain cyberliterary texts?* and 2) *Can the FCW course help student A develop her cyberliterary texts under Vygotskian perspective?*

In the same vein, Duff (2012) attested that the fundamental elements of any case study were in its holistic depictions of individuals as separated entities. Although the individual may be apprehended as a separate entity, he or she was in a sociocultural context. As a result, this allowed the researchers to analyze him or her through a more complex scientific prism, i.e., as a collective. Simultaneously, these individuals could be exemplary representations of their groups.

In fact, for Stake (2006), case studies have been quite common in second language teaching and learning research. He pinpointed that these studies were quite common due to its encompassing factors such as political, temporal and interpersonal. In addition, Dyson and Genishi (2005) claimed that through case studies, the researcher could have a set of glimpses of his or her participants' perspectives, experiences and behaviors toward one or more topics.

An extracurricular course entitled Fanfictional Creative Writing in English (FCW, henceforth) was organized and taught by the teacher-researcher. The students who participated in it were mainly University of São Paulo (USP) undergraduate students. In total, there were 5 of them, all female and from the course of English of the Department of Modern Languages (DML). Their level of proficiency in English ranged from intermediate to advanced. As it was a case study (DUFF, 2008, 2012; DYSON; GENISHI, 2005; STAKE, 2006), only 1 student (A) was chosen here. She was chosen because she attended the whole FCW course and did all the required assignments.

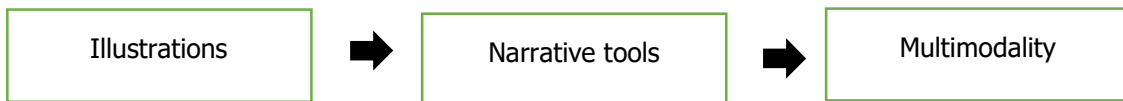
All the students who participated in the FCW course signed a written consent form. Therefore, student A signed the written consent form and agreed to have her written cyberliterary texts as well as her feedback sessions recordings analyzed and published. Furthermore, this research entailed four different research tools. These tools were carefully chosen so the teacher-researcher could collect and investigate the data properly. These research tools were: 1) the initial fanfictional creative writing, 2) the feedback session 1, 3) the final fanfictional creative writing and 4) the feedback session 2.

The initial fanfictional creative writing was the first assignment required by the teacher-researcher. Student A was invited to compose a text based on what she comprehended as a fanfiction in the first FCW class. She did that and then handed to her teacher in the second class. The feedback session 1 was a set of questions so that the teacher-researcher could identify student A's actual stage of development about fanfictions. It was applied just after her fanfiction handing in the second class. The final fanfictional creative writing was the last assignment required by the teacher-researcher. It was used so that he could identify student A's signs of development. She handed this assignment on the very last day of the FCW course. The feedback session 2 was a set of questions so that the teacher-researcher could identify more properly student A's signs of development about fanfictions. It happened after her handing the final fanfictional creative writing.

The development of cyberliterary texts under the Vygostkian perspective

The use of digital scripts by the FCW student A was one of the most interesting elements identified in her fanwriting development (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007). Based on her initial fanfictional creative writing, student A displayed few applications of these elements. In contrast, by the end of the FCW course, student A seemed to have mastered them. Her digital scripts mastery occurred in three different stages: 1) digital scripts as illustrative creative writing elements, 2) digital scripts as creative writing narrative tools and 3) digital scripts as not only images (multimodality). The FCW student A's three developmental stages can be summarized in the following figure:

Fig. 01 – The FCW student' first developmental aspect



Font: Author.

The first developmental stage, called digital scripts as illustrative creative writing elements, was mainly identified in the FCW student A's initial creative writing and in her feedback session 1. The initial fanfictional creative writing was the first fanfictional text student A should have produced in the FCW course. She produced it at home and handed to her teacher on the second class. In relation to it, the teacher-researcher could identify that she applied few digital scripts elements.

For Vygotsky (2007, p. 133), this may represent the student' actual state of development. The justification for this may be student A's lack of knowledge and experience in cyberliterary creative writing courses. Based on student A's feedback session 1 answers, she claimed that she had never participated in such course before. However, student A commented that she had already been writing fanfictions.

In student A's initial fanfictional creative writing production, she applied only one digital script (see appendix 01). The only digital script used was a picture of one of the musical members of the girl band entitled *Fifth Harmony*. Student A is a fan of this group. It is relevant to point out here that student A's picture is placed after the story. For Wertsch (2008, p. 89), this may represent the first stage of self-regulatory development. In this stage, the person is controlled directly by environment.

Furthermore, for Jenkins (2007, p. 37), the pictures applied in the classic fanfictions (i.e., fanzines) are usually attractive elements used merely to call the reader's attention. Therefore, the digital scripts may be used by the ficreaders to find the fanfictions more easily on the fandom and/or by the ficwriters to conquer more ficreaders. Still for Jenkins (2007, p. 38), the pictures applied to attract more readers are regularly placed in the beginning (few cases by the end) of the story. She denominated this process *fanfictional picturesque attractiveness*.

In case of student A, her initial fanfictional creative pictures can be classified as illustrative (JENKINS, 2007), because her chosen pictures were applied merely to illustrate her fanwriting. As a result, this may be an indication that student A apprehends fanfictions empirically. According to Lantolf (2015), the empirical perspective is construed upon mostly on sensory experiences. Therefore, student A's perspective on fanfictions may mostly be based on her sensory experiences toward them.

In order to ascertain whether student A's pictorial choices were mostly empirical or not, the teacher-researcher carried out the feedback session 1. The feedback session 1 occurred by the end of the fourth class. It took place in the fourth class, because student A had not handed to her teacher her first fanfictional creative assignment on the scheduled class. The scheduled day was the second class of the FCW course. Student A' feedback session 1 question 1 answers are illustrated as follows:

Excerpt 01 – Student' excerpts taken from the feedback session 1

Q. 01 – Why (or why not) did you choose images for your fanfictions?	
Student A	This is the first time I think better about images and fanfictions but I believe it's important to attract people's attention because there are so many fanfictions out there if you don't do that people don't read your story but I have no idea how to use in the correct way ((3s)) maybe because I never learned how to use.

Font: Author.

Based on the student' feedback session 1 answers, the teacher-researcher could notice that student A might not know how to use the pictures to her potentiality in the first fanfictional creative writing assignment. Therefore, based on Wertsch (2008), student A was other regulated by her environment. For instance, she claimed it was the first time she was thinking about the relevance of the pictures to her fanwriting (*This is the first time I think better about images and fanfictions*). Student A's answer may have been motivated by the teacher-researcher's question 1.

In addition, student A seemed to have felt uncomfortable about using the images in her fanfictional creative writing (*I have no idea how to use in the correct way ((3s)) maybe because I never learned how to use*). Apparently, she did not know how to use the images in her initial fanwriting, because she was never taught how to do it properly. For Vygotsky (2007, p. 56), without the expert help, the novice may take more time to develop him or herself.

Therefore, the FCW student A's attitudes towards the digital scripts were mainly illustrative (JENKINS, 2007). This may indicate what Vygotsky (2007, p. 197) denominated as everyday concepts. It can be inferred from student A's answers that her fanwriting practice came from outside the fandom or from outside what she may understand the fandom may be.

According to Vygotsky (2007, p. 34), the development of the human mind occurs dynamically through the internalization of a set of social relationships which are, in turn, mediated by a set of cultural tools. Therefore, based on student A's feedback session 1, she did not display much knowledge about fanfictions in the beginning of the FCW. This may have happened because

student A tried to control the cultural tools related to her fanfictional creative writing. However, she could not do it yet.

In contrast, student A's few applied images may have been chosen randomly. According to Wertsch (2008, p. 27), people may also display development when they can self-regulate their thoughts, feelings and behaviors to achieve their learning goals. If they cannot do that, their thoughts, feelings and behaviors control them instead. As a result, they display no agency and their learning goals are not achieved. Based on the student A's feedback session 1 question 2 answers, she displayed no self-regulation toward her few pictorial choices, because they were chosen illustratively as indicated as follows:

Excerpt 02 – Student' excerpts taken from the feedback session 1

Q. 02 – Why did you choose these images for your fanfiction?	
Student A	To illustrate my story because it's very common to find fanfictions on fandoms through images so this was my reason and attract more readers to my story.

Font: Author.

Based on the student A's question 2 answers, her pictorial choices seemed to be mainly illustrative (JENKINS, 2007). According to Jenkins (2007, p. 42), the images applied to fanfictions may serve as a book cover. Tactically, the main purposes of fanfictional images are to 1) illustrate the story and/or 2) attract more readers. This seems to have happened to student A's pictorial choices applied to her first fanfictional creative writing. In student A's own words, her images worked as mere illustrations to her fanwriting (*To illustrate my story because it's very common to find fanfictions on fandoms through images*).

The second developmental stage, called digital scripts as creative writing narrative tools, was mainly identified in the FCW student A's final creative writing and in her feedback session 2. The student' final fanfictional creative writing was the last fanfictional text they produced in the course. On this text, the student worked throughout the FCW course and handed to her teacher on its last class.

In relation to student A's final creative writing, I could notice that she had applied more digital scripts, compared to her initial fanfictional creative writing. This may be explained by the student's fanwriting development (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007), which the teacher fostered throughout the FCW. It was a more controlled manifestation of development. According to Vygotsky (2004, p. 46), human development is a constant and complex process. Therefore, one of the sheer indications that student A developed her fanwriting is that she may have mastered the digital scripts applications. Her mastery can be verified in appendix 02 and in her following feedback session 2:

Excerpt 03 – Student' excerpts taken from the feedback session 2

Q. 03 – Why (or why not) did you choose images for your fanfictions this time?	
Student A	I used images and songs for my final fanfictions because I believe they can help me tell my story better of course I felt more motivated to do it because of the course.

Font: Author.

Student A's digital scripts mastery may also be verified in her feedback session 2 answers. Based on them, student A appeared to be more confident. For example, she seemed more confident in using different types of digital scripts (*I used images and songs for my final fanfictions*). According to Wertsch (2008), confidence is one of the main characteristics related to agency. The more confident students are, the better learners they become, which based on a Vygotskian perspective may indicate development.

In student A's feedback session 1, she explained to her teacher that it was the first time she thought about the digital scripts more attentively. However, in her feedback session 2, student A applied digital scripts. Student A did that because she believed that the digital scripts could further her fanwriting. This may indicate signs of conceptual thinking development (LANTOLF, 2015), because she seemed more aware of the digital scripts and their relevance to her fanfictional creative writing.

Furthermore, student A may have displayed self-regulation, which is also a sign of development. According to Vygotsky (2004, p. 45), the human mind is mediated by tools and signs. Therefore, still for Vygotsky (2004, p. 45), a child shows development, if he or she can show mastery in using cultural artifacts, which may be appropriated by the child under skillful peers' guidance. For Lantolf (2015, p. 107), a type of guidance can be a task. In class 3, the FCW students were asked to identify and analyze modern concepts of fanfiction in Huynh (2014)'s *the boat*. Consequently, student A could pinpoint and later imitate (VYGOTSKY, 2007). Huynh (2014)'s main modern fanfictional features. This may have broadened her concepts about fanwriting and fanfictions as well.

According to Vygotsky (2007, p. 210), imitation should not be considered an inattentive act of structural reproduction. In fact, imitation can be a useful pedagogical and learning tool (LANTOLF, 2015, p. 117). In other words, to imitate something properly, students must know how to do it properly, otherwise, their imitation may not become an imitation, but something else. Therefore, for Vygotsky (2007, p. 211), a person cannot imitate what he or she does not have the capability of achieving it.

Still in class 4, I presented and explained the Huynh (2014)'s task. I promoted ZPD (VYGOTSKY, 2007) by providing the students with opportunities to investigate and appropriate the main fanfictional features of *the boat* by Huynh (2014). One of the positive results from this task was that the students could notice that the images were not only illustrative, but they also had narrative functionality (JENKINS, 2007). For Jenkins (2007, p. 59), fanfictional images also tell stories, therefore, they may also be used as narrative tools as well as other digital scripts such as hypertexts and videos.

As the FCW student A could appropriate Huynh (2014)'s main fanfictional features in her fanwriting (see appendix 02), she may have displayed agency (WERTSCH, 2008). For Wertsch (2008, p. 433), agency is a sheer indication of development. Furthermore, he attested that the type of skillful peers' guidance is crucial for the proper child's transition from other regulation to self-regulation.

In addition, student A's indications of fanwriting development (agency and self-regulation) were also identified in her feedback session 2 answers as follows:

Excerpt 04 - Student' excerpts taken from the feedback session 2

Q. 04 – Why did you choose these images for your fanfiction this time?	
Student A	This time I also used to illustrate but with a different idea in mind because now I know that images can also tell a story and they can be texts so I tried to also narrate my stories through my images to advance what I wanted to say.

Font: Author.

Based on student A's feedback session 2 answers, the teacher-researcher could notice that her choices may have been more well-thought compared to her feedback session 1. For Wertsch (2008, p. 46), the act of agency involves: a) social interactions and b) mediational means. In relation to student A's answers, she may have displayed agency in the FCW course. She may have developed her agency, because student A applied the images not only illustratively, but also narratively (Jenkins, 2007).

The third developmental stage, called digital scripts are not only images (multimodality), was mainly identified in the FCW students' final creative writing and in their feedback session 2. For instance, student A did not only use images, she also used other digital elements (see appendix 02) such as hypertext and music (HODGES; KRESS, 1998). For these authors, digital elements are modes. Consequently, they may not only be images, but gestures, sounds, colors and layouts as well. In relation to the images, she applied three to her fanwriting. This number is higher when compared to her initial fanfiction, which had only one.

However, the most important part to highlight here is that student A appeared to have understood the digital scripts not only as illustrative tools (JENKINS, 2007), but also narrative tools. In turn, if students use the digital scripts more consciously, the digital scripts can result in more organic (integrated) texts. This may be a sign of conceptual thinking development (LANTOLF, 2015), because student A did not only observe the digital scripts, but she also attempted

to master them. Therefore, student A applied the images not only as an attractive resource, but also as a narrative tool. In her case, the digital scripts were applied as the narrative tool: *the cliffhanger* (see appendix 02).

The creative writing element *cliffhanger* is also a very common fanfictional resource. Usually, the cliffhangers are used to build up narrative tensions or hook readers' attentions. For Jenkins (2007, p. 71), fanfictional texts tend to never have an ending. In Jenkins (2007, p. 71)'s research, longitudinally, he noticed that the ficwriters may return to their previous fanfictions to further their narratives or even rewrite them.

Therefore, the cliffhangers can also be the ficwriters' reentrance mechanism to their fanfictional creative writing. Student A's thinking seemed mainly empirical at first, because her concepts about fanfictions were basically related to her experience toward them. In other words, student A used to conceptualize fanfictions based on the name *fanfiction* and experimental practices such as reading other fanfictions or publishing them. However, throughout the FCW course, student A started reflecting upon her thinking and experiences toward fanfictional creative writing (see excerpts 03 and 04).

Conclusion

Digital Creative Writing in English has not been extensively researched in Brazil. For this reason, the teacher-researcher decided to organize and teach a Fanfictional Creative Writing in English (FCW) course. This course was taught to Languages and Literatures undergraduate students from a Brazilian university. As a result, the FCW participating students could develop (VYGOTSKY, 2004, 2007) their cyberliterary texts.

The FCW student A displayed signs of development in three distinctive developmental stages. The three developmental stages were denominated: 1) Illustrative, 2) Narrative Tools and 3) Multimodality. The illustrative stage entails apprehending the digital images as mere illustrations of a certain narrative. The second stage entails apprehending the digital images as tools to foster a certain

narrative. The multimodality stage entails apprehending the digital scripts as a constitutive part of a certain narrative.

Based on a thorough analysis of student A's various progresses, the teacher-researcher could identify that she was able to appropriate the FCW content, which indicated her agency development (WERTSCH, 2008). In addition, this student could show signs of conceptual thinking (LANTOLF, 2015) and creativity (VYGOTSKY, 2007) by elaborating more on the concepts of fanfictions and using the digital scripts to further her fanwriting.

In contrast, student A faced problems to publish her modern fanfiction. This happened because the fandom where she usually published her traditional fanfictions did not accept the new multimodal features. For this reason, she decided to comply with the fandom norms and removed the multimodal features to get it published. Therefore, it is advisable for future creative writing teachers to verify whether a fandom would accept or not the modern fanfiction.

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Appendix 01 - Student A's initial fanfictional creative writing

She'd moved to L.A. at the age of 19, with the dream of pursuing a career in music so that she could make enough money to help her Cuban family move back to the U.S. She'd been separated from her parents at the age of 15 - when she came back from school one day and found out her mom and dad had been deported back to their home country just a little over a year after they'd moved to Miami. Ever since, she'd promised herself she would do the impossible to help her family.

Lauren and her brother, Chris, had lived at their neighbor's house until Lauren graduated from high school. During her senior year, she'd met Camila, who would soon become her first serious girlfriend. They'd really fallen for each other - the kind of love that one may find once, maybe twice in their lifetime, if they're lucky enough. They started to build their future together when they moved to L.A., where Camila would start college and Lauren her musical career.

When Lauren got a record deal and started putting out singles, she soon became fairly famous and started touring all over the country. Camila, on the other hand, stayed in L.A. and focused on her studies and her internship at a recording studio. The distance - and the multiple fights that came with it - made them break up and live their separate lives.

Now, Camila has a boyfriend and a steady job as a songwriter and Lauren's just back in the city from recording her debut album. Just when they think they'd gotten over each other, destiny comes into play and makes them question everything.



Appendix 02 - Student A's final fanfictional creative writing

An Encounter

A.N.: So I created a playlist for every song that is played out in this chapter. (<https://open.spotify.com/user/tinazardo95/playlist/3fTMqPcawYyvccRtvvTbE5>) Every time you see a number like these (1), (2) and so on, you can play the corresponding song of the playlist to match the scenario. All of the songs I chose were released prior to or during the year 2013, which is when this flashback takes place. Enjoy!

It was close to 8 PM when the sun started to set and Camila found herself wandering around the hallways of Keana Marie's house. Everything felt as if she was entering a new dimension. A heavy bass line was all she could make out of the overplayed hip-hop song that was making people go crazy downstairs (1). Their shouts and conversations and the splashes of water in the backyard pool were also faint.

Camila's head felt lighter, but it was also running a hundred miles per hour. She couldn't explain it if she tried – it was like everything around her was suddenly more interesting. The bright orange reflection shining on the surface of the picture frames on the walls; the smell of smoke that followed her up the stairs; the soaked tips of her wavy brown locks caressing the small of her back; the beige-colored carpet sliding under her bare feet as she dragged herself slowly to the end of the hallway. Every image, every sensation and every feeling that would normally go unnoticed in that simple scene seemed enhanced.

Drawn by her curiosity, the 18-year-old reached the handle of the last door of the hallway – a light pink one, unlike the other plain white doors she'd followed down until that point. Her mouth fell the instant she set foot in the room. It looked just like the type of bedroom she'd always wanted and had seen countless of times on tumblr, but none in real life. It was big. Bright. Colorful. Vibrant. Peaceful. The adjectives came to her mind as she studied the details.



The wall tapestry adorned with those tiny lights people put on Christmas trees. The towers of books and magazines organized in a circle on the floor by the opposite corner of the room. An old guitar missing 3 strings leaning on the wall. A huge stereo system sitting next to a wooden desk that had a closed laptop on top of it. Camila could've never afford to have a room like that. Back at home in Mexico her room was half that size and she had to share it with her little sister. Here in Miami, she was stuck with makeshift bed in her cousin's room – which wasn't half bad, actually, but it still didn't even come close to this one.

In awe, she moved her attention from one detail of the room to another, wanting to take everything in at once and imagine what it would be like to sleep in there everyday, you know? Have that kind of life. "One

day", she thought. Then, as if she had made the biggest discovery of the century, Camila took a few steps to the end of the room and oohed to herself as leaned forward to peep out of the window – "*check out if the view was as dope as her surroundings*", the little voice in her brain told her. And yeah, it was pretty dope. She could see everyone in the backyard in their bathing suits or less, taking shots or drinking beer from red solo cups, dancing, making out, smoking, playing games, all without noticing her wandering gaze. But someone else did.

"Camila, what on earth are you doing here?" Lauren giggled when the younger girl jumped at her spot by the window as she was surprised by her voice. Then, realizing who it was, her expression turned into a bubbly, relieved grin.

"I felt like exploring" she answered simply, shrugging. Lauren shook her head in amusement, taking a step towards the girl. She moved one loose strand of hair out of Camila's face, studying her eyes for a few seconds. The younger girl shuddered slightly at the sudden contact of Lauren's fingertips against the back of her ear, but was quickly brought back to reality when she heard the girl laugh again.

"Are you stoned right now?" the green-eyed girl half-whispered, although nobody could hear them if they tried, and Camila gave her a slight nod.

"Guess there's a first time for everything" she chuckled. Lauren was a bit in disbelief, but the tiny smile that formed on her lips this time showed a little pride in the girl in front of her – for letting go and allowing herself to be a teenager.

"So," the older girl started, deciding she could have a little fun with this scenario "how does it feel?"

Camila sighed and looked up as the ceiling, altering her balance to each one of her feet and trying to find a good way to describe how she felt in that moment.

"It feels... wait, what? Where'd the music go?" she turned to look at Lauren, who had closed the door behind her, and started to make her way to the stereo system, quickly turning it on and reaching for the aux cord to plug it in her phone.

"Keana's room is soundproof" she explained without diverting her gaze from her phone screen as she went through the playlists in her library. "I want to play the songs I promised to introduce you to".

"Oh yeaah!!" the younger Latina exclaimed in realization. Lauren and her had connected through music since day one – when she met the girl, she was humming to a John Meyer song in her cousin's friend's basement and that was it. An instant bond. But Camila soon found out that the girl's music taste went way beyond that. Sure, she appreciated singer-songwriters just like herself, but she new a larger variety of underground artists that sounded amazing and Camila hadn't ever heard of them before. All of their conversations that followed that day had a part in which they would just talk about music. Lauren would show her a new sound and always promised to make a full playlist for them to listen together. Their friends called her "whipped" when they overheard that promise.

Camila didn't know if she could classify what they had as "flirting". They had built a pretty strong connection as friends in the last two months. She could even dare to say Lauren was a very special friend. But, although she felt it, she wasn't ready to admit that she was starting to get butterflies in her stomach every time she was near the girl. It was scary to say something like that out loud when she wasn't sure she'd be reciprocated. So they just naturally let them be drawn to each other. Well, yeah, maybe "whipped" was a good adjective after all.

Lauren turned up the volume as the first song of the playlist came on (2). Camila laughed softly when the 19-year-old started to move to the rhythm of the song, humming the melody to herself. She took the girl's hands and started to mimic her movements; bouncing her head lazily and closing her eyes, letting herself *feel* the music as they did their little dance throughout the first half of the song.

"*But you're sure that I'd learn, I'm pushing through bodies, avoiding me and walking around you. But you're cold and I burn, I guess I'll never learn cause I stay another hour or two*" Lauren sang, making the younger girl's eyes open again.

"Their lyrics are like *aaaargh!*" she clutched her fist shut at her own chest and grunted for effect. Lauren grinned and nodded strongly, squeezing the girl's other hand that was still in her own.

"Yeah, Matty's a genius, nothing less" she praised the lead singer of the band. Then, as the bridge of the song started, both girls decided to lie on Keana's bed and just enjoy the sounds ringing in their ears a little bit.

They stared at the ceiling in silence; watching the room get dark as the night came in and the only thing that allowed them to see their surroundings were the tiny Christmas lights hanging beside the bed. Camila was still in her bikini top and tiny jean shorts – and the combination of her partially wet hair and clothing was leaving little stains all over the bed covers. Lauren's dark hair was also sorta damp and the fact that it was beautifully spread over one of the colorful cushions wasn't helping the situation – neither did the fact that her choice of outfit matched Camila's almost perfectly, except she was wearing a loose tank top over her wet bikini top. None of them seemed to care.

They turned their heads to the side to stare at each other in amusement for a moment as the song faded out. Camila was about to thank her for being so amazing, for introducing her to this new musical world – but the very first seconds of the next song (3) made her stop in her tracks.

“I LOVE THIS SONG” she almost shouted, making Lauren laugh out loud, kicking the mattress underneath them slightly with her heels as she did so, entertained at how excited the younger girl could get, especially when she wasn’t sober.

“ME TOOOO” she mused in the same tone. Next thing they know, their voices were ringing smoothly in harmony to the song. As the chorus came closer, Lauren intertwined their fingers and started hammering their hands together against the bed to mark the pauses between the lyrics.

A moment.

A Love.

A Dream.

A Laugh.

A Kiss.

A Cry.

Our rights.

Our wrongs.

The two girls made the most of that song, getting up and running around the room, using a table lamp and a hairbrush for microphones, dancing, spinning around – forgetting there was a whole other world outside of that room. This was their reality, the here and the now. It was theirs.

By the end of this song, they lay down together once again, giggling and trying to catch their breaths as an instrumental tune started to play out (4).

Feeling a little dizzy than she already was after spinning around for so long, Camila found herself staring at Lauren and studying the details of the girl’s makeup-less face. Her plumped lips, always chapped. Her thick, black eyebrows perfectly trimmed. Her lumpy cheeks covered in freckles by her nose. Her green eyes like two vast galaxies, one complementing the other.



The girl’s collarbones peeking out of her tank top. The smooth ivory skin of her neck and chest. Her breasts. Her arms. Her left hand holding Camila’s right one so delicately.

“But tell me – you didn’t get to tell me,” Lauren’s voice was low when she interrupted Camila’s wandering thoughts, noticing the way she was looking at her and reciprocating by staring intently at the girl’s wide brown orbs



“How does being high for the first time feel?”

Camila had her lips slightly parted. She found herself in awe, practically hypnotized by the girl in front of her after realizing she now studied her figure in the same way. The doe-eyed girl inhaled deeply, lost in

thought as the sensations that Lauren's image and the gentle caressing in the palm of her hand took over any sense she thought she still had in her blurry little mind.

"It feels..." she started once again, trying to form the right words "It feels like everything is just..." she rambled, diverting her gaze from the girl for a second, so she could focus. "My perceptions make everything seem bigger and better and more important and it's overwhelming in a way..." she turned to look at Lauren once again. The playful look that was plastered across the girl's face when they were singing and dancing had vanished completely, and her features now seemed calm and almost... lustful? Her eyes half-shut and trained on her own, her mouth slightly open, her chest rising and falling slowly with every deep breath and her fingers lightly tracing patterns all around the extension of Camila's right arm made the girl shiver. There was that overwhelming feeling again. But she also felt *bold*.

"But, at the same time," the younger girl continued, "It feels... so... natural" Lauren's face was now a mere inch from hers. Her head was spinning, the butterflies making a wild fuss in her stomach. Camila gulped, reaching her left hand to the green-eyed girl's face "it feels *ethereal*".

(5)

Lauren finally closed the distance between them. Both green and brown orbs fell shut as their lips connected for the first time ever. Camila felt like that was her first real kiss. She'd made out with a few boys in her hometown – rushed, awkward kisses during games of spin the bottle or at a secret corner of the school during recess. She never felt completely comfortable, never really into those guys – kissing them was just something girls her age were doing and, because of that, she thought she was supposed to do too. This was a completely different thing.

Lauren's lips were soft and gentle, moving with hers slowly in perfect sync, almost as if they danced to the music playing on the background. The girl's left hand now cupped the back of her head, playing with the baby hairs that adorned the nape of Camila's neck.

*Baby, we both know that the nights were mainly made for saying things that you can't say tomorrow day
Crawling back to you*

Ever thought of calling when you've had a few?

'Cause I always do

As the first chorus of the song begun, she felt Lauren's tongue run across her bottom lip asking for entrance and almost immediately granted it. The younger girl let out a small moan as they deepened the kiss slowly, making Lauren's mouth vibrate slightly and igniting in her an even stronger need for Camila. Everything was *magnified*. Their breaths became erratic as their actions got more intense. Lauren's hand quickly traveled down Camila's side to reach the girl's thigh, grabbing at it so she would place it around her waist. Camila's left hand still cupped the side of Lauren's face, but, as the tension built up, she brought her right one underneath the other girl's shirt, feeling the smooth skin of her stomach shudder beneath her at the contact. Everything was *unique*. Their hearts beating against each other, the occasional nips on each other's lips, the rubbing of the bare skin of their legs as they moved in sync. It felt like nothing they'd ever experienced. It was all too much and, at the same time, not enough.

As the song faded out and another series instrumental sounds started to fill the room (6), they slowed down their actions and separated their lips, resting their foreheads against each other with their eyes still closed as they caught their breaths once again. After a few moments, Camila opened her eyes to find Lauren's already staring at her accompanied by a shy smile on her lips and a light blush on her cheeks. The younger girl chuckled lightly, her face gradually turning as red as Lauren's as she started to laugh too.

They spent a few moments like that, with Camila caressing the small of the older girl's back and paying attention to the series of chills that Lauren's caresses provoked with her hand back on the girl's neck. Their hooded-eyed looks told each other something they both understood perfectly but couldn't put into words. As if all the time they'd spend together, every conversation, every laugh, every secret shared and kind words exchanged made complete sense now. They didn't know they'd been waiting for each other for so long until that very final encounter – but now it was impossible not to see it. It had to be them.

Camila pecked the girl's lips quickly, breaking their streams of thought for a second and making Lauren grin at the action. The older girl had never been in love, and Camila knew that. But the sparkle in her eyes in that very moment told Camila she might be starting to get to know that feeling very well.

"Guess this should be a day for first-times, then".

