

The Personal Narrative Journal in the Christian Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

The paper considers how Saint Augustine's use of personal narrative as a form of spiritual exploration can be suggestive for journalling practices in the language classroom that could contribute not only to linguistic and critical thinking skills, but also to students' spiritual formation.

But if my pen is my spokesman, when shall I be able to tell of all the means you used to make of me a preacher of your word and a minister of your sacrament to your people? (25; bk.11, ch., 2)¹

Introduction

Readers of Saint Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions* witness the creation of an autobiographical world that narrates the saint's conversion, spiritual formation, and the transformation of his worldview. The story of Augustine's salvation is a written telling of his life and experiences in a consciously reflective manner, and as such anticipates the personal narrative journal. The Carthaginian church father thus provides a vital model for the integration of spirituality (and spiritual writing) with an emerging narrative persona.

This essay takes Augustinian self-writing a step further by exploiting its potential, not only as a spiritual formation tool but also as a vehicle for target-language development. The following discussion will highlight these two overlapping aspects of the personal narrative journal (hereafter, PNJ). To restate, we will talk about the PNJ as a structure for facilitat-

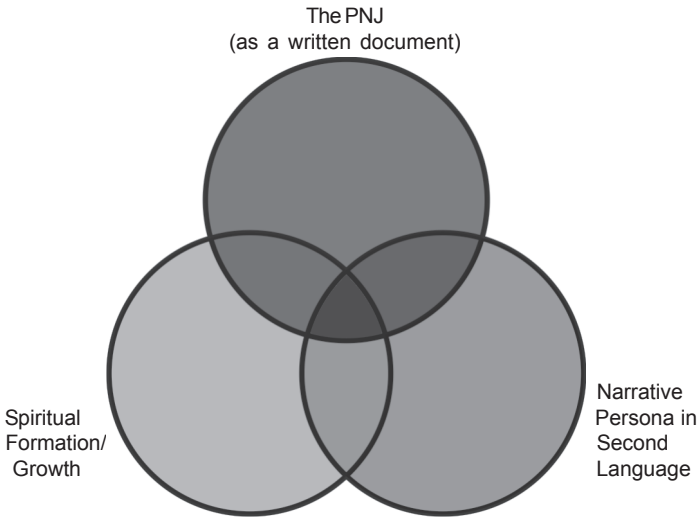


Figure 1. *The personal narrative journal spatially conceived*

ing spiritual formation under a kind of global simulation in the target language.

The ongoing discussion among Christian foreign language professionals over the relationship between faith and learning is due in part to the fact that matters of religious content are not typically a prescribed part of FL courses. The PNJ creates a space where a) spiritual reflection and formation can be facilitated in the target language, and b) measurement is possible due to a user-friendly format (see Appendix II).

With the preceding diagram in mind, we may predict the outcomes of both enhanced spiritual maturity and improved ability to write and think critically in the target language—an overlapping character/skill set to be sure. Limiting factors may include the number of courses taken, student motivation and engagement, stimulation and input by a language professional, supplemental course materials, and the availability of linguistically and culturally authentic resources. Additionally, the PNJ may not be fully appropriate for every upper division course. In a literature course, for instance, students may benefit more from the “interactive reading journal” described by Redmann (487), where literary texts are the focal point. Redmann’s model may be adapted, combined with the PNJ, or used in its pure form.

Managing Form and Content in the PNJ

1. Structuring Input

The PNJ is an ideal tool for all levels of skill and content building, especially for conversation and writing. Although the narrative aspect of writing is the main focus, journaling need not become a purely subjective exercise. Unlike a “learning journal” (metacognitive), the PNJ must be done in the target language. This is not to imply that the metacognitive aspect is absent or of little value, only that it is not the *primary* purpose of the PNJ.

Target language journaling requires the stimulus of background schemata and the input of vocabulary clusters and appropriate grammar in the proper sequence provided by the instructor and course materials. Given Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, the previous observation may seem to state the obvious, yet comprehensible input can never be taken for granted or the result may be indeterminate or failed schemata (59). Hauptman submits the following working definition for the useful notion of schema:

Schema theory is essentially a theory that explains the role of past experiences, or background knowledge, in comprehension. According to schema theory, . . . knowledge (or experience) is organized in cognitive structures or *schemata* and stored in our brains at all levels of abstraction. (623)

In addition to life experience, instructional input serves as prime material for schemata and must be accessible and meaning bearing: “*it must contain some message to which the learner is supposed to attend*” (Lee and VanPatten 27). Stated differently by Pritchard, “This process of selecting and ordering sensory input results in the creation and instantiation of schemata, which are then available for use with new information” (276). Journaling tests the soundness of dynamic input in a living laboratory of communication allowing for the essential identity building process related to internal narrative—this is central to the PNJ.

Furthermore, journaling processes and transforms experience and input into a productive skill on both a mechanical and an intuitive plane. A quick overview of the benefits, as in Simons’ study, reveals that journaling is self-directed learning (responsible vs. passive): it increases self-awareness, increases awareness of yourself as a communicator, creates an occasion for active participation in class (if shared appropriately and voluntarily), calls for recapitulation and reinforcement both during and after the

course, and allows for evaluation of personal growth (86).

In terms of practical application, a “confessional narrative” of this kind can draw on concrete activities and strategies such as the standard usage of texts, videos, guided discovery and simulations (Storme 658). A student’s interior story will also benefit from the following digest: field trips that provide culturally and linguistically authentic experiences, sharing a devotional in class in the target language (emotive, spiritual), writing a personal testimony and sharing it in a public setting, narrating one’s life experiences that have taken place in the milieu of the target language, language specific chapel and religious services such as Spanish chapel where the students participate and take ownership, language tables, music for listening (receptive) and singing (productive),² and following a “content-approved” (i.e., “decent”) *telenovela* as a class project. Additional activities could include writing and saying prayers (both liturgical and spontaneous), scripture memorization, culturally authentic meals (especially where the target language is spoken), programs such as poetry recitals, talent shows, drama presentations, and musicals; and finally, the use of a text that provides a chapter/schema node for spirituality.³ All of these activities may in turn be written about in a reflective way.

Professors in universities with a foreign language requirement at the entry level may face a special challenge. Due to class size and the realities of evaluating large numbers of journals it may not be feasible to have a complex journal component. In such cases, a Spanish text like *¿Qué tal?* offers a partial solution in its Laboratory Manual. The writing section for each chapter contains a composition exercise called “Mi diario,” which at least gives students an opportunity to write on a variety of chapter related themes from a personal perspective. Where appropriate, these themes can be “doctored” by the language instructor to include some form of spiritual interpretation or reflection. As a minimum it is helpful to have initiated the practice at the entry level. The typically smaller classes at the intermediate level and above make meaningful interaction with the journaling process more of a reality for most students and professors.

2. Assessment

The specifics referred to above produce a textual artifact which can be measured by a rubric. Of importance in this regard are proficiency levels and narrative development, which offer a partial way of managing and monitoring the PNJ. Several brief examples should suffice.

Within the parameters of structured level appropriate input speech can begin to surface for the adult learner. At the Novice level of oral speech individual words and phrases start to emerge.⁴ Similarly, in writing the novice is able to copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases and reproduce some from memory (*Speaking Guidelines*). This appears to be a pre-narrative stage with regard to the target language, yet it is not beyond the basic introductory forms of story, such as in children's picture books. Kupersmitt and Berman conclude that "Overall narrative construction appears to be affected by level of overall development and maturation, less so by level of language mastery" (308). In other words, the language professional needs to innovatively apply an awareness of both language proficiency levels and narrative capability since they do not always match. At the university level, even the young adult beginning student may have some essential narrative tools present, but lack the vocabulary and implicit language system to fill the forms.⁵

Nevertheless, the struggle implied by the breakdown between narrative capability and linguistic lack seems to be a valuable experience for the learners. My first year, second semester students (novice/novice+) are required to keep a personal narrative journal and do suffer some frustration from the "half-full" toolbox syndrome, yet they manage to stretch themselves into generally comprehensible level-appropriate narrative containers. Since discrete sentences emerge at this level, their capacity for self expression is analogous to children's budding story telling abilities (cf. Kemper 105). For assessment purposes, it seems reasonable to factor in both narrative skill growth and proficiency level.

At a more advanced level, speakers write paragraph length narratives and descriptions of a factual nature (*Writing Guidelines*). As an advanced speaker of "Christianese" in book 2 the Carthaginian saint begins to narrate his youthful sins, giving shape and life to his story—his life narrative—in terms of his present Christian perspective and understanding. He begins to confess his life (77; bk.4, ch.6). Simple narration of this kind serves to fix the structure. To tell *what* happened is prerequisite to explanation, understanding, and ultimately to making meaning from the text of one's life. Augustine's understanding of the Christian life, both before and following his full-blown conversion, is a traceable process in his memoirs. He begins to narrate with an analytical eye, which in language proficiency terms would move him well within the range of a Superior level speaker / writer. My intention with this analogy is not to imply exact equivalencies

between language proficiency levels and levels of narrative self-expression. However, a general awareness of both processes will help the language professional monitor growth in these two interrelated and often overlapping areas.

How to best take advantage of and channel emerging narrative levels into target language proficiency and channel them into the story of students' spiritual formation is our objective. Careful assessment rounds out the picture: "When learning outcomes and grading criteria are clearly stated, students know what role their expression of faith versus their language skills plays in relation to their grades" (Beatson 68). The appendices to this article show what one professor has done.

On another level, student writers also assume recognizable roles while carrying out their tasks, and these have assessment implications as well. Writer roles may be observed in our laboratory model, Saint Augustine, whose self-generated narrative fits Miller's list of basic elements for narrative (75): There is 1) a protagonist (Augustine remembered), 2) an antagonist (internal resistance from his unconverted self and the Manicheans), and 3) a witness (in addition to God as witness we find his emerging would-be Christian self in the text, which is always becoming his observing self as writer). It is noteworthy that these three dramatic parts (protagonist, antagonist, and witness) are present in each student, suggesting process as a measurable phenomenon (participation, oral and written production), where students write, resist,⁶ and reflect. Assessing resistance and reflection requires subjective intuitive evaluation, but can be quantified to a degree by an expectation check list.

3. Evaluative Tools

Evaluative tools essentially allow us to assess the process itself. Student surveys and anecdotal feedback, in conversation and in an anonymous format, are indispensable in helping professors and language instructors realize their objectives. Appendix III, "Personal Narrative Journal Student Evaluation," is a beginning step toward consciously scrutinizing the PNJ and one way to involve students in creative feedback. Students can critically evaluate the journaling process, reflect on it subjectively, and add an anecdotal layer to the mix.

The sample of evaluations considered here, while not large, nevertheless offers feedback worth consideration. For example, there were mostly positive responses to several core objectives of the PNJ: "Personal entries

(your story),” “I feel more comfortable about writing in Spanish as a result of the PNJ,” and “The personal narrative journal has overall been a positive experience.” Under the section “My grammar, spelling and vocabulary have improved,” most students perceived themselves as much improved.

However, some sections came out less favorably. Although more than a few students’ journal entries seemed to indicate breakthroughs in the area of spiritual awareness, this was not broadly verified on the evaluation forms, where the mean answer was “helped some.” One result of this outcome on the evaluations is the present effort to find a greater and more effectual integrative role for spirituality in the PNJ. Worth pondering: How accurate are students’ perceptions of their own spiritual growth, and does the professor’s desire to see higher scores in this section color the results in some subtle way?

Cultivating a Narrative Persona in the Target Language

Turning to the core notion of a narrative-generated self or persona, the Scriptures use the metaphor of the human heart or self as a medium receptive to writing. Romans 2:15a is a case in point: “Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts” (NIV).⁷ The self, however, is not only a passive receptor text; it in turn writes and enunciates. But as Byrne notes:

The remembering and writing self is always different from the remembered and lived self. The function of the writer’s ‘life’ story is to close this gap by showing how the past and distant self became the present narrating self. (15)

This principle is true of Augustine’s life narration-confession as surely as it is of a second language learner who seeks to define his or her emerging bilingual-bicultural self in the ongoing process of identity making and spiritual formation. The writing and/or verbalization of this process feeds an energizing circle, which in turn instantly becomes an object of reflection by the becoming self. An individual’s developing spirituality serves as a kind of values filter and monitor that administers the process globally and in turn feeds back into the cycle.

Although some artificiality in self-writing is unavoidable, the self-narrative journal fosters the creation of a persona. This was Augustine’s approach to his own story—the creation of the “I,” or “subject of the narrative,” as reported by Horne (68). The emerging self as subject in a PNJ

is therefore by implication the re-creation of the person by the recollection of the past, and its casting into narrative, typically written, form. To be sure, the past which is reported may be as recent as the movement from event to paper. Horne's perceptive observation is central to the *raison d'être* of the PNJ: "It is the shaping of the remembered events in a narrative form that bestows meaning and a renewed grasp of one's personhood. One is, so to speak, the story one tells oneself. One constructs one's personality in the telling of the story" (69); doing so in the target language is a personalized and hence effective means to accentuate acquisition.

1. Why Narrative?

It is generally conceded that narrative is an essential element of our identity as learners. Miller, for example, notes that "in a continuous silent internal activity, we tell stories to ourselves all day long" (66). For McGrath, there is significant evidence that most people find it easier to think in narrative forms rather than conceptual terms (24). Keeping a journal allows narrative to function within productive boundaries and contributes to the building of a personal history and a life-long skill (Simons 16). Narrative production is also performative, compelling further learning in a particular path (Miller 78). The latter is particularly noticeable when students have had rewarding ministry experiences in the target language, which they then recount in writing.

The internal narrative tells "stories," but equally important, it tells *our* story. For Kemper, "stories transmit cultural and individual traditions, values, and moral codes" (99). This is high interest information for professors and teachers who seek to make spirituality an integral part of the learning and formative experience. The individual's stories can be tapped as a source or used as receptive structures for directed input. An assignment to describe the role of prayer in solving a family crisis would be a guided journal assignment of this kind. It could be further structured by suggesting the use of particular grammatical forms or tenses such as past narration showing preterit/imperfect aspect.

2. Cultural Aspects of Narrative Germane to the PNJ

As students acquire more extensive schemata, they become more capable (as did Augustine with his new "Christian culture") of recasting their story in culturally transferable terms. Reynolds has shown that schemata—in addition to storing information—also house cultural knowledge,

beliefs, and values. These all influence comprehension processes (354), and facilitate “cultural transferability.”

Cultural transference skills must be developed and integrated since, as Camery-Hoggatt points out: “there is rhetorical play between the different schemas housed under a single word. That rhetorical play is almost always untranslatable into a different language” (65). Indeed, a term may house schematic nuances in the new language that create gap-filling traps for the unwary or uninformed. How such “traps” work is familiar to language teachers acquainted with problematic cognates, and may be exemplified anecdotally: During a trip to Mexico, one student reported a communication impasse because she understood *enseñar* only as “to teach” while a frustrated native speaker vainly tried to make her understand “to show.” The student’s gap-filling mechanism only allowed her to supply meaning in one way. Upon her return to the classroom, however, she had a kind of linguistic epiphany when for the first time she noticed classroom usage of *enseñar* as “to show.” In this case the gap was felicitously filled after the fact.

If reading culture and literature requires receptive gap filling, then the production of speech and writing requires the filling of “performance gaps.” By this I mean that the lower the proficiency level the more likely the bucket is to come up dry as the mind searches for the deep aquifer of appropriate schemata. Strategies for filling performance gaps include circumlocution, reflecting, body language, the use of gambits, memorized phrases, proverbs, sayings, jokes, memorized word plays, dialogue fragments, pop culture insider bits, knowledge of literary and artistic cultural artifacts; and, in the church, prayer formulas, liturgy, hymns, choruses, well-known Bible passages, preaching clichés, and so on. Strategies like these augment the learner’s communicative language ability by adding content (lexicon) to the implicit linguistic system (Lee and VanPatten 16–17) and to schematic hierarchies.

The above discussion highlights the role of cultural competence. If we do not wish to misread and be misread by the target culture, and propose to construct a culturally authentic self-narrative in the target language, we should take cultural proficiency very seriously indeed. This is the reason that I have included description of *and* response to culturally and linguistically authentic events as part of the requirement for journal writing, because it obliges significant cross-cultural interface, oral inter-

change, and negotiation of meaning through actual events and reflective critical evaluation.

3. *The Role of Memory*

Combined with cultural perception, memory provides the building blocks for narrative recreation; and memory, as the Carthaginian Saint stresses in his *Confessions*, must be (re)collected. His term of choice is *cogito*, meaning “I think,” and is related to *cogo*, “I assemble” or “I collect” (219; bk. 10, ch. 11). The root of our English word “re-cognize” can easily be seen to involve a type of retrieval system in which that which has been learned is “reassembled” and made available for narrative use. Based on this understanding of recollection, Augustine combines narrative with his newly acquired Christian skills as he plumbs his memory and cries out in prayer: “O Lord, my Helper and my Redeemer, I shall now tell [*narrabo*] and confess [*confitebor*] to the glory of your name how you released me from the fetters of lust which held me so tightly shackled and from my slavery to the things of this world” (166; bk. 8, ch. 6). *Narro* deals more with the autobiographical level while *confiteor* is more applicable to the notion of an inquiry into the meaning of his experience.⁸ Earl’s comment that “In the *Confessions*, both philosophy and history (personal and Scriptural) are fused into a single system” (19), speaks to the holistic approach suggested here where language and individual life narratives are not divided. Augustine’s narrative is not a flat rehearsal or “re-collection” of memory, but is an integrative telling of past experiences into the present. An integrative (re)telling of the past is a powerful interpretative and formative tool, which for students can be contextualized in terms of the target language and their religious community. This is particularly significant in the Christian classroom where ideally, the student’s general spiritual formation and “shaping” is made to interface in an interdisciplinary manner.

The assumption here is that all narrative—written and oral—in some sense originates as a memory-based phenomenon. Theoretical studies have generally shown the fallacy of attempting to separate writing from speech, since they are two aspects of a single linguistic occurrence.⁹ Augustine stresses the oral aspect of his confessions—a sacrifice offered by his tongue—while nonetheless expressing them in written form (91; bk. 5, ch. 1). Behind the partnership of written and oral discourse, the forms that the *Confessions* take create the stage for creative expression in terms of a

newly emerging identity: his innermost thoughts are revealed, his soul praises God, and his lips pray. Apparently, Augustine formulated his Christian identity by writing and processing his confessions over time, reflecting as witness how his own spiritual formation was taking shape in his consciousness (Crosson 28).

Augustine notes that he has laid out the confession of his history before God because it is still alive in his memory (52; bk.2, ch.9). The point to emphasize here is that he does not simply leave his memories dead and buried, but that he reacts and interacts with them from his present perspective. Memories are a fundamental source that students may draw on as they construct new schemata to describe and define personal interior narratives; memories, however, must be nudged into the new linguistic containers of the target language. This was the case when students in my intermediate Spanish class wrote on an experience that had deeply impacted their life's perspective. Using the target language, most of them referred to compassionate ministry outreach in various Latin American countries—trips which had profoundly altered their way of seeing the world. Sehnalek and Warford emphasize the value of personal experience of this kind, describing it as “el proceso de negociar la nueva identidad sociocultural” (“the process of negotiating the new sociocultural identity”) (172).

Writing the record of one's journey dips into what Augustine calls “a vast, immeasurable sanctuary” (216; bk.10, ch.8). Memory, so described, is the deep source for one's inner narrative world, and as part of the soul-self it may take on concrete dimensions as it is transformed from idea into writing. All that is necessary is that the students begin to intentionally contextualize, report, and interpret what has happened to them in the past and what is currently happening in their personal histories. The ultimate goal is to transcend observation and become fully engaged participants who are able to draw on their memory-narrative as a primary source for productive skills. Guidance must be offered, however, as some students require substantial structure so that they do not drift off into repetitive banalities (cf. Appendix I).

Another reason why memories efficaciously supply narrative material is because they are frequently connected to emotion, and memory on the affective level enhances autobiographical self-revelation. Feelings are more intangible than reporting facts or mere lexical recall. Augustine's recollection of his feelings (51; bk.2, ch.8) is significant because the emotions imprint the memory pool in a different way than the image of a table for

instance. A beginner may say “*mesa*” and point to the table, but only an Advanced plus or a Superior speaker is likely to understand *gozo* as more than a simple signifier without first having to pass it through a translation filter that labels it as *joy*. Its meaning once acquired is also an emotional imprint, and in all likelihood experience-related. Augustine does not spare himself the twinge of self revelation in this regard: “When shall I set down the record of those days of rest? One thing at least I shall not fail to tell, for I have not forgotten the sting of your lash nor how quickly your mercy came and in how wonderful a way” (189; bk.9, ch.4). One student in Spanish Conversation and Composition had suffered a family tragedy the previous year. When it was her turn to lead the opening class devotional in Spanish, she finally felt free to share about this and seek prayer support from the rest of the class. Her telling was both therapeutic and revealing in terms of spiritual self-narrative development. This was a transformative step for the student and resulted in a more positive experience in the class from that day forward.

A similar kind of memory to the emotionally tinged ones discussed above, and accessible through specific schemata, are those that are based on the senses. The example of our “seen” table previously noted, is of this variety. Sense perception guides memory, which in turn works off sensory perception nodes. Augustine notes that memory preserves everything separately, according to its mode of entrance whether through the eyes, the ears, or through smell, taste, and touch (214; bk.10, ch.8). In this way the memory may serve the emerging interior narrative, since images imprinted by way of the senses tend to be concrete. “*Taquitos de carne asada*” for example, may carry vivid impressions of smell, taste, touch and sight (and be event related), and will probably be remembered connecting all of these areas. They are not likely to be remembered as “little-roast-beef-tacos-in-translation.”

This becomes evident in the experiences of people who return from study abroad programs and have trouble finding the English equivalent for ideas, names, or experiences uniquely acquired in the host country. In the case of idiomatic expressions, sayings, and proverbs the same truism holds. Ideas and the words that represent them generally must be “re-loaded” in the target language. We are now back in the neighborhood of our *gozo* (joy) example above. Augustine puts it this way:

For we should not know happiness unless we knew what it was. We have heard it named and we all admit that it is our ambition to achieve it, for we do not take pleasure

simply in the sound of the word. When a Greek hears it named in Latin, he derives no pleasure from it because he does not know what has been said. (227; bk.10, ch.21)

The PNJ as a Vehicle for Spiritual Formation

During the course of this essay it has been difficult to reserve the “spiritual formation” elements for this section, and rightly so. Since the raw material of spiritual formation is typically ubiquitous on the Christian university campus, the objective then becomes its appropriation and application. Academic religion courses, community worship and practice, and personal spiritual history may all be incorporated into the foreign language classroom, and linked to the narrative persona that we foster as language professionals. It should also be emphasized that there is an intrinsic spiritual value in the creation of a self-revelatory space, as Capps notes: “Through his *Confessions*, Augustine gives self-disclosure a central importance in the Christian life” (268).

Self-disclosure is only possible, however, in the presence of another spiritual quality, the kindly disposed will. A context of trust will increase students’ disposition toward transparency, and mitigate the additional threat suggested by vulnerability in a medium other than the mother tongue. The capacity to express thoughts in the target language without unsolicited mental translation is surely a universal goal of foreign language teachers and students. This implies the taking on of new signifiers for old signified in most cases and learning many new ones that have little or no previous referentiality in the mother tongue. This arduous process must be volitional if it is to be efficacious.

Augustine describes his ambivalence concerning his desire to convert, lamenting that as long as he was duplicitous, he was also frozen (173; bk.8, ch.10). The disposition of the will is clearly fundamental as well in the success or failure of the second language learner. In the end it is Augustine’s willingness both to hear the voice of a child in a nearby house and to read the famous Pauline passage (Rom. 13:13–14) that pushes him to full conversion (177; bk.8, ch.12). Likewise it is typically the receptive skills of both hearing and reading that produce critical mass towards a firm commitment to acquire a second language—this commitment will be needed. For some the road is long and circuitous indeed; as Lee and VanPatten have it, “SLA is dynamic but slow” (19).

We see this same assimilation process again at the death of Augustine's mother. Relational confession and/or journaling offer a place to contextualize an emotional experience (loss in this case) and integrate it into his narrative. Nevertheless, the record of his personal story is not for him alone, but also provides reflective material for other people:

So it shall be that the last request that my mother made to me [to pray for her each day at the altar] shall be granted in the prayers of the many who read my confessions more fully than in mine alone. (205; bk.9, ch.13)

What can be gleaned from Augustine's self-revelation in this set of circumstances? He confesses the past in order to know who he is in the present, and that others may know him in this way as well.

In a simulated second language community it is also possible to find the expression of emotional camaraderie in the target language with a person facing hardship, loss, or simply the need to be known. The same principle holds for prayer, counseling, affirmation and literally the whole range of human emotions and experiences. The more this discipline is practiced the less artificial it will seem. While switching to the dominant code may be appropriate in certain emergency situations, in general this practice devalues or hinders the exteriorized writing of one's life in the target language. At first students may not realize that their second language is more than an artificial system of sounds—it is a sacramental instrument of communication and solidarity. This aspect of our life together on the Christian campus taps into the dialogical potential of self disclosure in the PNJ.¹⁰

As a final observation on spiritual formation and target language writing, the PNJ may draw on the use of the Scriptures, serving both sacred and linguistic ends. However, as discussed by Smith, the use of the Bible need not “reduce the text to display language, but [it] rather assists a response to the text on its own terms” (74). Prescribed tasks such as assigned interaction with the Scriptures beyond simple memorization can both accentuate genuine spirituality and be linguistically advantageous. For example, Augustine's almost constant reference to the Psalms is a pointer for Christian teachers of foreign languages, since it is well known that the Psalms express a wide range of human emotions and experience. Interaction with them in the target language provides a sort of soaking, permeation, or affective immersion experience for the learner. Beatson offers a usage of the Psalms that includes the PNJ-compatible idea of a prayer journal (66).

Conclusions

The connection I expect to have established is between the narrative self/persona that is constructed in the conceptualized narration of one's life story (for us, in the target language), and the spiritual awakening that potentially accompanies the movement into the space so created. As a case in point, Ohm's investigation reveals that there is "some evidence for the assumption that in the process of SLA a learner's mentality undergoes a reconstructive mutation which is not only essential for the learning process as such but also compels the learning subject to redefine her identity" (459). We learn from Augustine that the interior or personal narrative is inseparable from the self. We can therefore speak as much about Augustine's "self-generated narrative," as we can of his "narrative-generated self." Autobiography as a form of confession is a particularly useful tool in this regard due to its use of familiar events to shed light on the mystery of the self (Capps 261).¹¹ The inseparability of Augustine's spiritual formation from his process of self revelation can be instructive for those serving in the field of foreign/second language acquisition. As Augustine contemplates his own shameful past he is tempted to "sink as far as that hell of error where no one confesses to you his own guilt" (137; bk.7, ch.4). Yet he recollects the past and integrates it into his new story, in much the same way that a student's memories (both past and current) may be retold and integrated in terms of the student's second language narrative persona.

As a final point, I wish to emphasize that the goal of the suggestions and observations made here is not to diminish the mother tongue and its associated identity, but rather to open up an overlapping second-language narrative self. Personal narrative journals serve as an aid to this end, and provide a format that both expresses and encourages the internalization and integration of the target language. The professional literature on journaling in tandem with the anecdotal and theoretical observations presented here invite further research in the area of personal narrative journaling as a tool for the integration of spiritual formation and a narrative persona in the foreign language student. There is also need for measurable studies to be carried out in the classroom context (the evaluations included here are but a small step), as well as the suggestions, experiences, and reflections of modern language colleagues.

NOTES

¹ Quotes from the *Confessions* are taken from Pine-Coffin's translation: page/book/section (chapter) number.

² With reference to the use of songs in the classroom, we will do well to remember Scott's caveats of content and cultural validity (75).

³ See Michael Thomas's ¡*De viva voz!* with his chapter "Lo espiritual," or *Enfoques* with "La religión y la política" (Blanco, Chapter 8).

⁴ For this segment on proficiency levels compare the grid in *OPI Manual*, page 31 for the Assessment Criteria—Speaking.

⁵ Cf. Lee and VanPatten's discussion of implicit language systems: "Like first language learners, second language learners ultimately construct an *implicit linguistic system* consisting of a variety of components that interact in language use (e.g., a lexical system of words and grammatical inflections such as noun markers and verb markers, a phonological system that governs the sounds, a syntactic system that controls the structure of sentences)" (15).

⁶ Beatson explains that "students are resistant to or tentative about making public their own views in the FL due to extra-linguistic developmental issues . . . : fear, lack of personal confidence, or inadequate preparation to engage sophisticated argument" (67).

⁷ See also 2 Cor. 3:2, 3.

⁸ He will tell, from *narro* (to make known; to relate, tell, narrate) and confess, *confiteor* (to confess, allow, acknowledge; also, to reveal, make known) (*The Classic Latin Dictionary*).

⁹ Iser, for example, asserts that "it is sufficient for us to take the speech act as our heuristic guideline in considering the fact that the written utterance continually transcends the margins of the printed page, in order to bring the addressee into contact with nontextual realities" (55).

¹⁰ Compare Darhower's use of the dialogue journal, where the ongoing conversation with the professor is the main objective.

¹¹ A narrative produced persona may also be conceived of in relationship to a *confessing act*. Broadly conceived the confessing act is comparable to Ceo-DiFrancesco's verbal reports: self-reports, self-observation, and self-revelation (121).

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APPENDIX I

Personal Narrative Journal (from Intermediate SPA I Syllabus)

PERSONAL NARRATIVE JOURNAL-WRITING PORTFOLIO

1. You will need a three ring binder (not more than a 1 in. thick back) to journal your personal adventures in Spanish! A minimum of two entries per week is required—one as a personal reflection, "mi historia" 'my history,' and another entry as an assigned writing or activity. These journal entries will be graded subjectively and not primarily for grammar and orthography (see grading rubric). Do your best to write accurately, but the point here is personal expression at your level—you will be graded for your creativity and effort at expressing yourself in Spanish more than for the mechanics of the language per se (that happens elsewhere; i.e., regular class-assigned compositions, exams, etc.).

2. During chapters 1 and 2 of our text your entries should consist of a minimum of 100 words per entry. For chapters 4–6 journal entries will consist of a minimum of 150 words each. To achieve the grade of “A” on the journal something more than the bare minimum entries will be necessary—evidence of honest spiritual reflection, a creative touch, extra more in-depth entries, etc.

A. **Description:** “*Personal entries*” are autobiographical, and consist of releasing inner creativity & imagination. You will record and reflect on who you are, past and present, and who you are becoming—both as a person and as a learner of Spanish. You may also describe feelings, hopes, goals, and spirituality (*en español naturalmente*). This kind of entry should tell your story and history, in some way reflecting insights, understanding, progress and questions. Your observations will naturally be more basic to begin with and grow as you progress in the language. (14 entries—one per week)

B. **Description:** “*Assigned entries*” consist of two kinds:

1. Six of these entries will consist of the “Para escribir” exercises from the Workbook. Write “see journal” in the workbook for this exercise and write the exercise out by hand in your journal.
2. This leaves 8 entries such as those bulleted below to be chosen by the student. They should consist of (a) a description/summary of linguistically and/or culturally authentic experiences, and (b) your personal evaluation and response to these. Some scheduling flexibility is allowed to accommodate events as they come up. Examples of this category include: volunteer work in the Hispanic community, mission outreach trips in a Hispanic setting, Spanish field trips, Hispanic church services or chapel, or a written summary/response to an approved Spanish children’s book or a Spanish movie.

NOTE: Please number, date, and word count all of your journal entries. Journals are checked every two weeks, and will follow the pattern noted below (See course calendar for due dates):

Week one: a) Personal entry, b) Assigned entry (composition theme from Workbook)

Week two: a) Personal entry, b) Assigned entry (linguistically and culturally authentic event)

APPENDIX II

Personal Narrative Journal, a sample grading rubric

	<i>Expectation not met 1-3</i>	<i>Meets expectation 4-5</i>	<i>Exceeds expectation 6+</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Global: Creative expression, appearance, personalized				x2=
Accuracy (evidence of careful use of vocabulary, orthography, grammar, and writing style)				x2=
Personal narrative and reflection entries (content and self-expression)				x6=
Assigned entries (a): WB composition (Has the topic been covered?)				x5=
Assigned entries (b): authentic linguistic cultural experiences (description and reflection; evidence of personal, spiritual, and linguistic growth)				x5=

Definitions:

- a. Expectation not met (1–3) – Entries are too short, hard to read and/or decipher, the entries show little creativity or intentionality.
- b. Meets expectation (4–5) – Word count standards are met or exceeded, the entries show “engagement,” there is not excessive dependence on untranslated vocabulary items. 4.5 is a middle score here = 90% (A-).
- c. Exceeds Expectation (6+) – The student has gone beyond the assignment to express maturing insights into his or her experiences, spiritual growth, and learning. Shows evidence of pushing into the next proficiency level.

APPENDIX III

Personal Narrative Journal, Student Evaluations

(Evaluations of two courses, 2004; Summary of responses from 13 students.)

<i>How much were the following items helpful or useful?</i>	<i>very little</i>	<i>little</i>	<i>Some ?-, +?</i>	<i>much</i>	<i>very much</i>
"Assigned entries" (culturally and linguistically authentic experiences)			5	5	3
Workbook-related entries		4	6	1	2
Personal entries (your story)		1	1	5	6
The number of entries was about right.	1	3	4	2	3
The length of the entries was about right.			2	6	4
It was clear what was expected.			2	8	3
The professor's comments and corrections were helpful.			4	4	5
My grammar, spelling, and vocabulary have improved.			3	9	1
Journaling was an essential part of my learning experience in this class.		1	5	4	3
Journaling in this class has helped my self-expression in Spanish.			4	5	3
Journaling has helped the professor and me to know each other better.			6	6	1
Journaling in this way has helped me to internalize Spanish.		2	2	5	2
I feel more comfortable about writing in Spanish as a result of the PNJ.		1	2	6	4
The personal narrative journal has overall been a positive experience.			3	4	5
I hope to continue journaling in future classes.		2	3	4	3
Journaling has benefited my personal spiritual growth.		3	7	2	1

(Appendix continues on next page.)

1. How have you benefited from writing in the personal narrative journal?
2. What did you find to be least helpful about the personal narrative journal process?
3. What suggestions do you have for improving the course requirement for journaling?
4. How will (or not) journaling help you in the future as you continue the process of second language acquisition?

Note: The students' anonymous written comments are available as a Word document, "PNJ Student Comments," from Galen Yorba-Gray, gyorbagr@ptloma.edu.