

Teaching Creative Writing in English Among the Undergraduate Students

Mrs. T. Ananthi, M.A., B.Ed., Ph.D. Research Scholar

=====

Abstract

Teaching of English at college level aims to develop the communicative competence of the learners both in spoken and written aspects of the language. To achieve their end, the teachers should be trained in such a way to adopt various pedagogical interventions and techniques to meet the communicative needs of the learners. Most of the students leave the college with poor writing skills. This is because of the teachers who do not pay enough attention to the skills and ability of writing. The planned teaching on the part of the teachers using innovative teaching methodology becomes very essential. It is against this context the paper aims at the use of creative writing task in developing writing skill of the college students who are the future citizen of our nation.

Keywords: creative writing skills, creativity, improving writing skills,

Introduction

Creative writing, thus, is a powerful way of learning and reinforcing linguistic features of the language being studied. Through immersing in creative writing, students can not only consolidate target language learning in a more natural way, but they can also manage to become more fluent in the target language thanks to the many benefits it brings, most of which come from the collaborative work they were involved in. These advantages are mainly connected with work on both familiar and new vocabulary, negotiation, sharing, and reporting.

The Nature of Writing

It is widely agreed that there exist four main language skills, which are basically divided into two groups; these groups are as follows: receptive skills and productive skills. Receptive skills encompass both listening and reading, while speaking and writing are considered to be productive skills.

As mentioned above, writing is one of the two productive skills, and it involves the graphic representation of oral production, a fact which, in itself, poses some demanding challenges; for instance, by being a macro-skill, writing comprises a number of micro-skills, such as putting words together in correct word order, using vocabulary correctly, following the conventions of sentence level grammar, keeping unity and coherence, among others; all these micro-skills need to be well developed in order to convey ideas clearly to a particular audience.

On the other hand, writing per se is, in fact, approached in order to transmit thoughts to others and to ourselves, for that matter. In this regard, Krashen (2003: 30-31) states: While writing does not help us develop writing style, writing has other virtues. As [Frank] Smith ... has pointed out, we write for at least two reasons. First, and most obvious, we write to communicate with others.

But perhaps more important, we write for ourselves, to clarify and stimulate our thinking. Most of our writing, even if we are published authors, is for ourselves.

Creative Writing

Ken Hyland (2002) who argues that we can see, creative writing as, any writing, fiction or non-fiction that occurs outside of everyday professional, journalistic, academic and technical forms of writing. Most typically we think of novels, short stories and poems in this category, but it can also include screenwriting and playwriting, which are texts to be performed, and creative non-fiction such as personal and journalistic essays. This shows us that creative writing covers a broad area of texts serving many different purposes. However, Hyland (2002) also points out that contrary to academic writing which is focused on rhetorical conventions and discourse expectations of disciplinary communities, the main focus of creative writing is on self-expression.

Recently, creative writing has become an independent academic discipline especially at the universities in the United States. Students usually enroll to particular creative writing courses, choose between fiction, poetry, screenwriting or playwriting and further develop their writing and editing skills in the particular area. Finally, at the end of their studies, they earn either bachelor or master's degree, depending on their study program.

Despite opening creative writing programs and courses at the world's major universities, it has become quite popular in recent years also in terms of its usage in EFL teaching. Just to illustrate the popularity of the phrase, Teacher would like to mention the number of hits when "creative writing" is typed into Google search. In an instant, about 36,000,000 results emerge which proves it to be a topic of great interest. According to *Google Trends*, the issue is currently mostly searched in Trinidad & Tobago, Australia & New Zealand, Ireland, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Singapore, United States and South Africa (Google Trends, 2015). This also reflects the countries from which professionals publishing articles and books about creative writing come from or the regions where they work.

One of the leading figures in the area of using creative writing in teaching English is Alan Maley, who published numerous articles concerning creative writing in teaching English on well-known teaching-related websites and journals. His article based on a short-scale survey can serve as a guide for those who are just at their beginning with using creative writing in their classrooms (Maley, 2009).

The aim of the actual use of creative writing features in teaching English is then to allow students to express themselves freely, raise their motivation, creativity and imagination and practice writing skills.

Creative Writing and Motivation

Creative writing, as supported by various professionals in the field of language teaching, is beneficial for students in many respects. Not only it entertains students, but it also fosters their artistic expression, explores the functions and values of writing, clarifies thinking, stimulates their imagination, helps them in their search for identity and last but not least it enables them to learn to read and write (Tompkins, 718-721). Its engaging nature allowing students to express themselves and present their world views also helps teachers to raise students' motivation.

Motivation itself is quite a complicated issue which is hard to define in simple terms. There have been many psychological studies during the past century aimed at explaining human motivation.

Writing Activity and Creative Writing

Even though it may seem to be widely believed that creative writing activities might be time consuming and not for everybody, many leading figures in the field agree that using them can enrich all of the students, help them with clarifying their thinking and also help them become more creative.

In English classes, there is usually hardly any time left for unusual and out-of ordinary activities, since practising all four skills takes all of the available time. Fortunately, using creative writing in teaching English allows students to practise not only writing as a skill, but also practise grammar and vocabulary, acquire new vocabulary, stretch imagination, develop creativity as well as boost self-confidence and self-expression.

Main difference is here the motivation and a sense of informality and playfulness which goes hand in hand with allowing students to express themselves freely, not in the previously marked out borders. Its contribution can also be seen in its introduction to a world of literature and books. If learners find their way towards their own creative writing, they are also likely to become gradually interested in literature and reading, which has unfortunately been in decline recently.

Using Creative Writing

Creative writing allows students to think deeply about situations that they would normally take for granted. Once they write them, they can get back to them, rethink them, change them and re-live them. If the writing is personal, it can help its author to understand people and situations surrounding him or her and also understand the world around them as well as cope with various issues of their personal lives.

Creative writing with its artistic value also brings them amusement and enjoyment. Using creative writing in the classroom can also pave the way for innovation. By sharing their works, students can inspire each other, stretch their imagination and try to bring something new and unexplored. At the same time, by using creative writing exercises, teachers can add a sense of production, excitement, and performance to the language classroom, to give students the opportunity to say something surprising and original, even while they practise new aspects of language. 'Activities [do not] require special slots in the timetable designated 'creative writing'.

They can be integrated into the course book and can support the language syllabus, whether it is functional, notional, situational, grammatical, humanistic, all of these or none of these.

Conclusion

Creative writing needs some new and innovative approaches. The task fulfils the development of creative writing among the college students. Designing programmes towards developing techniques suitable for the target population in order to make writing a pleasurable and purposeful act at all levels of education.

References

- Al Jarf, R. S. (2007). Online instruction and creative writing by Saudi EFL freshman students. *Asian EFL Journal*, 22. Retrieved from: [asian-e\\$-journal.com](http://asian-e$-journal.com). Online.
- Bowen, T., *What is Suggestopedia?*, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2002.
- Chomsky, Noam. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*, Massachusetts: MIT Press. Print.
- Ellis, N. C. (2002). *Frequency effects in language processing*. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 24(2). Print.

Mrs. T. Ananthi, M.A., B.Ed.
Ph.D. Research Scholar
Government Arts College, Coimbatore-18
ananthiviveka@gmail.com