

Chapter 83: Incorporating Creative Writing into Saudi Education

Rihab Haidar Alshehri

Virginia Tech Language & Culture Institute.

Abstract: Writing is considered a challenging skill learned in schools. Writing in language classes focuses mostly on obtaining academic criteria. As a matter of fact, competence and creativity in writing are hard to get due to the lack of students' motivation to learn. The students' motivation decreases **because** of the pressure of grading. Incorporating creative writing in schools plays the role of a lifesaver of academic writing. It is the magic wand that develops students' cognitive skills and students' life skills. This review highlights the significant effects of creative writing on increasing and developing student's personal skills including critical and creative skills.

Keywords: creative writing, critical thinking, imagination, identity, academic writing.

Introduction

“Writing is like painting with words, the paper is the canvas, the pen is the brush, the words are the colors and the verbs, nouns and adjectives are the blendings of the hues that add depth to the picture you are creating,” Reed Abbitt Moore. Writing allows writers to portray their inner thoughts, release emotions and free their imagination. However, nowadays the joy of writing in schools is fading. Writing learned in language classes focuses mainly on achieving all the academic criteria. Furthermore, students are constrained to specific topics with limited ideas. The students' urge to write creatively is declined due to the pressure of pursuing good grades. Creative writing is a type of writing that aims to enable the students to unleash their imagination and develop their creativity. It cultivates substantial real-life skills. In fact, implementing creative writing in schools will impact significantly the students' progress by building a sense of community and improving their cognitive growth in the areas of imagination, self-expression, and critical thinking skills. Accordingly, that will then support students' academic writing skills.

Creative writing cultivates a sense of community among the students through collaboration and communication. They learn how to build a positive relationship with their classmates that is built on trust and respect. The primary goal is to support and motivate each other. Collaboration is one of the tools that is used to assess the students' work in creative writing. The students work in groups to share each other's precious work. Students learning collaboratively can capitalize on one another's knowledge and talents (asking each other for information, assessing each other's ideas, monitoring each other's work, etc.) (Kulamikhina, Birova, Alipichev, Vasbieva, & Kalugina, 2018). Furthermore, creative writing flourishes the students' effective communication skills. Communication is boosted in group discussions and peer editing. Students learn to be fair and respectful in their comments on each other's writing. They learn to understand each other's perspectives, and be critical thinkers not bias in their

comments. Creative writing exercises in the classroom not only enable students to share their own thoughts openly but also encourage them to value and consider the feelings and viewpoints of other people (Turler & Cetinkaya, 2020). Thus,

collaboration and communication are essential tools in creative writing that depend on developing good relationships between students.

Creative writing improves students' positive and critical thinking skills by shedding light on events and people around them. Creative writing promotes the students to observe their surroundings and reveal their reflections on them. It motivates the students to question daily-life events and the people around them. These inquiries lead to critical analysis and knowledge acquisition. To clarify, students are encouraged to question what they observe whether events or people's attitudes, and then they search for answers and logical analysis. Moreover, creative writing encourages students to consider their experiences as a solid base for their writing. For instance, students flashback their life journeys that had made them who they are in order to create new versions of their journeys, and they picture how the potential present could be.

Experience is not all about action and your physical reality, although it can be. It is also about your psychological reality; even your imagination and dreams. It is about your fears, uncertainties, failures, terrors, losses. Experience, for a writer, is an art of losing. Even in a triumph, there is cost. The cost of experience is currency for creative work (Morley, 2007, p. 45).

As a result, creative writing enhances students' abilities to solve problems and overcome life difficulties. By highlighting on their own stories, students would explore their issues and analyze them. Students seek to find solutions by writing new scenarios of their problems with different situations and characters, and then they display the potential consequences. Creative writing guides them to view their problems from different angles. According to Bolton (2011), the privacy of writing can expose any emotions in order to liberate them, and to recognize and find suitable ways to act in the future. Actually, the students utilize their creative talents to improve their present and predict a better future.

Creative writing is the student's effective instrument of self-expression and self-defined identity. Students have the authority and the ownership of their own work. To demonstrate, they have the entire control over their writing without teacher or classmate intervention. This feeling of authority and freedom ignites the students' creativity. Agency is shown as the freedom to build worlds, the ownership of ideas and the emotions that a piece of writing belongs to the writer (Healey, 2019). In other words, they are able to personalize their work by creating their own characters, their own events and even their own style of writing. In addition to that, creative writing enables students to give rein to their emotions and inner conflicts. Writing without constraints facilitates unleashing the students' repressed feelings and raise them to the surface in the form of art. Creative writing is, in a manner, "capable of writing freely". Feelings are a form of writing that convey ideas, perceptions and dreams (Babayigit, 2019). For example, students write about situations describing the same struggle they are suffering, or they create characters representing their own inner conflicts. Furthermore, creative writing is a means of building the student's self-respect and confidence. It creates a secure world for them to express themselves and reveal their weaknesses. Bayat (2017) confirmed that it is essential that students can communicate easily with their friends

and teachers, that they believe that they will not be judged for their opinions and that they can feel secure and confident. Creative writing makes students confident because they believe that their writing will not be underestimated or mocked. On the contrary, students' self-esteem and self-satisfaction are increased when they produce their piece of art. Indeed, creative writing propels students to express themselves and explore their identities.

Stimulating creative imagination is regarded as the main engine of creative writing. Creative writing urges students to create and seek their dreams. Students imagine their dreams

and the paths that could lead to these dreams. Certainly, this reinforces the students to live their dreams, work hard to pursue them, and keep seeking more dreams.

Morley (2007) reported:

Dreams are a means for reflection, and a preparation for situations we might yet face, so the imagination can work as a teacher and maker. Many good writers create characters and situations without undergoing a real-life experience as that character or of that situation. They use a sympathetic imagination to reach and explore; they 'make it up'. Imagination and dreams are parts of your reality (p. 45).

Creative writing encourages expanding the limits of students' imagination that leads to fantasy. As a result, students start to invent imaginative worlds and unpredictable situations that fosters insights, visions and creativity.

We need to get to know ourselves better and, in that way, reconnect with what we know: our selfless knowledge. Writing assists this self- and selfless knowledge, to a point. However, writing 'what you do not know' contains possibilities too – those of the imagination (Morley, 2007, p. 46).

After all, imagination is considered the fuel of creative writing.

Creative writing contributes to developing students' academic writing skills. Students work on building correct academic writing while they are enjoying it, and that is the aim of creative writing. In creative writing classes, students develop expression fluency by practicing writing creatively constantly. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are not as important as creative ideas in creative writing assignments. Del Águila Pinto (2017), pointed out that creative writing in the classroom's main objective is to promote fluency over accuracy. The students are given the green light to articulate their feelings and thoughts into words, so they tend to elaborate on using many examples. By motivating students to write without worrying about grading their papers, they have a good chance of finding ideas and participating in tasks that they know will contribute to their learning process much more easily (Del Águila Pinto, 2017). Moreover, co-authoring, which is implemented in creative writing classes, is regarded as a useful collaborative tool. It allows students to learn from each other, inspire each other and acquire a new language and writing styles. Sharing responsibility in the creative process is a powerful motivator for our students and often leads to better writing quality (Strass, 2018). Likewise, critiquing each other's work is an effective assessment tool in creative writing classes. Critiquing each other's writing contributes to nurturing students' writing skills and developing students' critical thinking. Tarnopolsky (2005), acknowledged that the way to master these critical techniques is to gain the skill of commenting and critiquing, which should be built from the beginning of creative writing. Additionally, the idea of having an audience fosters students to incorporate impressive expression, metaphors or idioms to captivate their reader's attention.

Creative writing facilitates the development of language at all levels: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and discourse. It allows learners to manipulate the language in fascinating and complex ways of trying to convey personal meanings in a specific way (Tok & Kandemir, 2015). In addition to that, students will be introduced to different writing styles according to the activities given in creative writing classes, so they could write poetry, plays or any type of stories. To exemplify, students enhance their narrative and storytelling skills by narrating their anecdotes. Dali, Lau & Risk (2015), believed that creative writing and certain types of oral presentations are unique in enhancing the skills of students in meaningful and powerful storytelling. In fact, creative writing plays an influential role in improving academic writing in an engaging learning environment.

To conclude, the charm of writing starts to decay due to the pressure over the students whose primary focus is on chasing good grades. Actually, incorporating creative writing in schools affects the

students crucially by building a sense of community and developing their cognitive growth such as imagination, self-expression and critical thinking skills. Besides, creative writing supports students' academic performance. It enables the students to gain academic writing skills while they seem interested in writing. Creative writing is regarded as the lifesaver of academic writing, and it would open doors for students to appreciate writing as an art.

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