A THEMATIC DISPLAY ON CREATIVE WRITING CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This thematic paper delves into the concept of creative writing, examining the challenges inherent in the process and exploring strategies to enhance creative writing skills. By reviewing prior research, this study identifies methodologies that serve as practical tools for both educators and students seeking to articulate their imagination effectively. The analysis draws on theses and articles published in reputable journals between 2010 and 2021, challenging the widespread misconception that creative writing is an innate talent. Instead, the findings underscore that creative writing is a skill that can be cultivated at any stage of life, provided appropriate strategies are employed. This paper highlights a range of creative writing techniques, including those historically utilized and those currently adopted, offering valuable insights into teaching and learning practices in this domain.

1. Introduction

Creative writing is an equally important and useful skill as writing. As it is integrative in nature it is the skill that caters for other skills and stimulates planning, editing, reviewing, analyzing, proofreading, grammar etc. It also, to some extent, improves skills such as listening, reading and those skills that will never become obsolete in education; not only in language classes but in other subjects it holds a vital status and use, without which it becomes difficult for learners to keep track of learning. Through writing students take notes, summarize and express their ideas. Writing is also one of the difficult tasks and not an

easily acquired skill. (Fatemepour, 2014) argued that writing is a continuous process involving brainstorming, organizing ideas, structuring sentences logically, and reviewing content to ensure clarity and coherence for the audience. According to Graham and Haris (2002), writing is one of the most powerful communication tools of human beings and the improvement of writing skills is the key to success within and outside school. Being the carrier of creativity, creative writing is given much weightage over any other genre of writing and the use of this writing (creative writing) as intellectuals (The New York Times, 2001). Humera (2011) states that most teachers do not know what creative writing is and hence creative writing instructions are blurry. The reason for this clouded instructions in Pakistan is because replacing traditional teaching of writing is a difficult task as it involves the curriculum which could not be easily changed. Hulbert (2000) states that writing as a crucially important element of academics and profession is influenced by basic writing instruction similarly story writing is also influenced by the blur writing instruction. Students and teachers have challenges writing and teaching very basic genres (Khan, 2011). So, it is generalizable that story writing is equally challenging for them, as story writing requires a higher level of creativity and imagination and a decent level of understanding form previously written and published related literature. In Order to accomplish a good story a student must have a clear image of what he wants to write. This requires creativity and practice (Hentry, 2017). Since stories require students to remember its

elements and organize them in a systematic way. But students find themselves in a puzzling situation while story writing where they strive to write a coherent story and think freely, that is, think creatively (Samantha, 2015). This task demands students' engagement and in order to make it a creative write up students ought to enjoy the process of writing through which they will think creatively and let their imagination run wild (Henry, 2017). Young story writers need a prompt that can help them remember elements of the story and a technique that may help them be creative and enjoy the process throughout the process until task completion. The thematic paper examines a variety of creative writing techniques, mainly Synectic Model and Story Maps, encompassing methods that have been traditionally employed as well as those that are presently in use. By doing so, it provides meaningful insights into the evolving practices of teaching and learning within the field of creative writing. These techniques, drawn from past and present frameworks, demonstrate how creative writing pedagogy has adapted over time to meet the changing needs of learners. The analysis underscores the relevance of blending tried-and-tested approaches with innovative strategies to enrich the creative writing process. This comprehensive exploration offers educators actionable guidance for fostering students' imaginative expression and writing proficiency. Similarly, it equips learners with tools to hone their creative abilities, reinforcing the idea that writing is not merely an inherent talent but a skill that can be developed with practice and the right methodologies. Ultimately, the paper

contributes to advancing the understanding of effective teaching strategies in creative writing education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teaching and Learning Writing

Teaching writing is not as easy as it seems. Westwood (2008, p. 56) said that "Written language is perhaps the most difficult of all skills to acquire because its development involves the effective coordination of many different cognitive, linguistic and psychomotor processes". That is why the students tend to resist such laborious activity. In ESL settings, it becomes even worse. Students who have writing difficulties tend to have a tough time organizing and composing their writing (Williams, 2013).

2.2. Importance of Creative Writing

Many students often opt out of creative writing courses due to a lack of clarity regarding their objectives. However, creative writing holds significant potential to influence others in ways that spoken words cannot. It enhances organizational abilities, cognitive skills, and persuasive power, making it a crucial skill that strengthens mental faculties. Research indicates that students engaged in creative writing often excel in other academic disciplines as well (Amabile, 2018). Studies suggest that creative writers consistently challenge themselves to generate innovative ideas, which fosters problem-solving skills and boosts confidence (Balkar & Topkaya, 2017).

Moreover, creative writing enables students to broaden their perspectives and develop a visionary outlook by harnessing their imagination. This practice expands their thought process and addresses their reluctance to express themselves in classroom settings. Writing serves as an outlet for overcoming the anxiety associated with self-expression. It not only builds confidence but also enhances communicative abilities. Activities like planning, drafting, organizing, and employing language effectively to convey ideas are integral to creative writing, making it an invaluable tool for personal and intellectual growth (Bergstein, 2017).

2.3. Short Story

Murdoch (2002) highlighted the value of short story writing in EFL courses, stating that "short stories, when carefully selected and used, provide rich content that significantly enhances intermediate-level students' language proficiency." He emphasized that teachers can design a variety of writing activities around short stories to help students improve their writing skills. Additionally, short story writing aids in developing conciseness, refining composition, and improving grammatical accuracy. Self-expression is also a vital element of effective writing. Essex (1997) identified seven key reasons for encouraging children to write stories: to entertain, foster artistic expression, explore the benefits of writing, stimulate imagination, clarify thinking, explore identity, and develop reading and writing skills. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating short stories into the curriculum, as they engage students while fostering language development and creative thinking. Short stories serve as an effective tool for enhancing linguistic and cognitive skills.

2.4. Story Writing

Writers select different types of discourse based on their purpose (Williams, 2013). Common categories include description, exposition, narration, and poetry (Temple & Gillet, 1984). Narration, particularly storytelling, is significant for elementary and middle school students. Beyond academics, story writing allows students to express ideas, emotions, and imagination. It can entertain others and provide self-enjoyment, making stories—whether written by students or others—appealing (Vallecorsa & deBettencourt, 1997; Graves & Hauge, 1993; Nodine *et al*., 1985).Houston (2015) identifies key story elements: plot, setting, conflict, goals, outcomes, and characters' internal responses. These elements, structured into a beginning, middle, and conclusion, shape coherent stories. The beginning introduces the setting, characters, and conflict. The middle develops the plot through events, while the conclusion resolves the conflict or reaches a climax. Understanding story structure is critical for writing development, helping students craft meaningful narratives (Martin & Manno, 2005). Phillips and Steiner (1985) compare storytelling to solving a puzzle, where every piece forms a complete picture.

2.5. Teachers Perceptions of Creative Writing and creative writing instruction in Pakistan

The curriculum of Pakistan highly values the development of good creative writing skills. And the government has documented a few policies available for the public and teachers all across the country to access them and try to achieve the benchmark. However, we need to set our goals through a realistic perspective that our classes are mixed in terms of learners' cognitive levels and to achieve those benchmarks instructors do not have a strategy to cater the needs of the learners. The end result is the student expresses dislike for writing tasks that are to be carried out in the class and shows disagreement. Humera (2011) states that, in Pakistan "creativity and creative writing" are linked to literature. As a result, this put both active members of students and teachers in great confusion about the term "Creative writing". Most of them do not know what creative writing is and so is the blur writing instruction.

2.6. Issues and Suggestions in Creative Writing Pedagogy in Pakistan

It is evident from the history of writing pedagogy in Pakistan that teaching writing is a tough job (Dar, 2015). Teachers have to plan proper steps for guidance and as well facilitate them with suitable and appropriate technique that may be employed in order to carry out the task. Furthermore, Teachers will also have to be aware of the possible challenges that a student may come across during the process of writing. In addition, the stages of writing: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing are expected to contribute to strengthening students' thinking skills because they engage them in processes such as connecting, analyzing and evaluating ideas, a fact that leads to sharpening students' thinking skills.

2.7. Mind Maps (Definition and Perception)

 Mind maps are popularized by Tony Buzan, who himself invented effective visuals which could function and organize ideas or represented words and ideas or other links that arranged central

points by branches and contained words, phrases, colors and visual image (Buzan, 2006). After Buzan's mind maps popularity, the rigor to research on the very idea began and many researchers came up with their perceptions and definitions of mind maps. Farrand *et al.,*(2002) describe mind maps as "Mind maps provide an informed and effective study technique when it is employed to write a material". Houston (2015) tested mind mapping on his students and found it satisfactory. Furthermore, the mind maps help learners to acclimatize new data, to brainstorm and to construct their reasonable diagram. Mind mapping is a system which improves imagination and advances individuals' learning. They guarantee people to review information and to demonstrate the relations between various concepts and ideas. During instructional sessions and trainings, a mind map likewise causes instructors to clarify why they are concentrating on a specific part of a point. From the mind maps that are made by students, teachers may have a good idea whether the pupils understand the topic or if it is still ambiguous for them. According to Murley (2007), maps can trigger the brain's function in associating numbers with visual quality and as a result our brain is in a condition to store more facts. Mind mapping is a procedure that is utilized in the prewriting movement. It guides the students to compose words which have association with the subject that they will talk about by utilizing a great deal of parts of words around the point (Fraser, 2006). It is additionally a planning action in the writing that is finished by composing catchphrases around the point and after that, it

very well may be utilized to grow the students' thoughts into great paragraphs. By the means of connecting thoughts on paper, mind maps perform the function of the brain like it connects ideas through cells. Hence, broke free students and beneficiaries from note-taking (Keles, 2012). Dawson *et al*. (2005) express that mind mapping is a kind of prewriting strategy as the principal phase of the writing procedure and as the point at to find and investigate our underlying thoughts regarding a subject. The mind mapping methodology can be utilized to investigate a wide scope of topics and can be utilized for each sort of writing, for example, story, persuasive, argumentative, descriptive, recount (Riswanto & Prandika, 2012). Students can improve their thoughts as mind maps function admirably as a compelling visual structure that empowers students to unmistakably observe the connection among thoughts, and therefore urges them to gather certain thoughts as indicated by their comparable qualities as they continue (Padang and Gurning, 2014). By mind mapping, one can build up their capacity in retaining, conceptualizing, learning, just as creativity (Ingemann, 2008 as referred to in San Rshqiya, 2013). In fact, the authors who have great writing skills, they need to endeavor to do a ton of practices. Initially, they will meet a few issues recorded as a hard copy of their experimental drafts. To put it plainly, great composing isn't effectively to be cultivated on the grounds that the most troublesome advance recorded as a hard copy is the manner by which the essayist makes great opening in the primary passage as it has a significant part to the entire content. In this way,

individuals should realize the composition procedure that will enable them to acknowledge explicit objectives at each phase of making progress. The way toward writing must give a progression of arranged learning activities to enable them to comprehend the idea of composing at each point. (Jakarta, 2017). Characteristics of mind maps according to Long and Carlson (2011) is stated as follows:

Mind mapping is Imaginative, analytic, verbal and pictorial, multi- faceted, colorful, associative and multidimensional

2.7.1. Types of Mind Maps

Jacob (2011) in his studies has found eight types or models of mind maps that are used by teachers to instruct writing as " Bubble map, circle map, double bubble map, tree map, flow map, multi flow map, brace map and bridge map". Any of these could be applied in virtually any lesson as an initiative to make a typical lesson an enhanced education plan.

2.7.2. Story Mapping

Story Story mapping offers students a comprehensive view of story structure and the relationships among its elements (Li, 2017). Writing and creativity are closely linked in language teaching, with writing often seen as a manifestation of creativity (Lin, 2008). Writing enhances learners' creativity, while fostering creativity is an effective approach to teaching story writing. A structured method, such as story mapping, can help stimulate ideas for effective instruction. Story mapping, a metacognitive strategy, visually organizes key story elements—characters, setting, goals, and more—into a

graphic framework (Swanson & De La Paz, 1998, cited in Taylor *et al*., 2002). Foley (2000) emphasizes its value in helping students identify story components and understand their integration, promoting critical thinking and active learning. This approach reshapes students' cognitive structures by encouraging careful reading to analyze characters, plots, and resolutions. Basic story maps focus on beginnings, middles, and ends, while advanced versions delve into plot or character traits (Samantha, 2017).

2.7.3. Students' Perceptions on Maps

Students perceived mind mapping as "fun, intriguing, and motivating" (Joyce & Showers, 2012, p. 53). They preferred using it individually rather than in groups, as it allowed them to express personal ideas. Williams (1999) noted that mind mapping improved learning by helping students understand and recall information effectively. Research highlights that this strategy appeals to visual intelligence, enabling students to express themselves clearly and meaningfully. Teachers have found it particularly useful in early-grade education (Elementary Teachers' Views on Mind Mapping, 2011). Zipprich's (1995) experimental study demonstrated that story mapping, a related technique, enhanced cognitive planning, increased total word count, and improved thought unit organization, leading to better overall performance.

2.8. Creativity

The encyclopedia of human behavior suggests that creative thinking is a form of directed thinking which is applied to find a solution to a problem. Mansoor (2013) believes that creativity is an

intervention of something that is new rather than bookish knowledge. Similarly, various researchers and scholars write about creativity and interpret in their own context. Long (2011) argued that creativity is a divergent thinking ability characterized by sensitivity to problems, fluency, originality, and elaboration.

2.8.1. Creative Thinking

There are many models of creative thinking. Each model argues that these models should be taught; nonetheless, most of these models teach how to think outside the box or challenge the brain to see a conflict from another perspective. Aristotle can be said to be the founder of creativity. He argued that the ability to use metaphor and to see resemblance is a mark of genius. Aristotle is the one who recognized the importance of using metaphors to gain new knowledge by making connections to what a learner already knows in the field of study. This model can be taught to students to develop their creative thinking skills (Burner, 1969).

2.8.2. Metaphors: Enabling people to make sense of the world

Metaphors are the most important component of the synectics model. The Synectics model is based on metaphors and meanings that can be elicited from them. The greatest contribution of metaphors is to "carry across" (Munby & Russell, 2001, p.117). Metaphors also play a vital role in multi-level learning. It is as understanding one kind of thing in terms of another. The use of metaphors enable an individual to make sense of his or her experiences by relating them to previous, comprehendible experiences. The similarities are usually personal connections made concerning personal experience. In addition, they involve some creativity on the part of the individual to look past the obvious differences between the metaphor and the original item. Kovecses (2002) states that most complex knowledge is based on complex metaphorical structure. That is, as an individual makes sense of his or her own experiences, he or she develops basic metaphors. Those metaphors then serve as the ground level for other experiences and meanings and other, new metaphors. Eventually, all experiences are grounded in a complex structure of metaphorical knowledge and meaning. Loy (2010) told the essence of making connections to enhance understanding. These connections are made with the use of metaphors, symbols and analogies. These metaphors can effectively be used in language classrooms and prove to be an effective tool for metacognitive steps of huge import.

2.9. Theory of Synectics

The pioneer of synectic model is said to be William Gordan. He brought a major turn over in the field of education. This model is not just limited to academia but is also used at professional levels (Joyce, 2011). Burner (1989) in his paper writes that the Synectics is a way to teach creativity to all types of thinkers, including those in academia. Gordon, the pioneer of synectics developed a series of phases that challenges students to think beyond their normal thinking to solve problems and to express themselves. Metaphors and analogies play a crucial part in the synectics model.

2.9.1. Synectic Method

The pioneer of this method was of the view that "to do" is "to imitate". The role of the leader, here, is to stimulate thinking through calling for different kinds of analogies. Also the leader should be good at choosing best solution that fits in the situation. Caine (2014) wrote The educator is responsible for a knowledge of individuals and for a knowledge of subject-matter that will enable activities to be selected which lend themselves to social organization, an organization in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute something" (p. 56). It is the responsibility of the educator to provide environments that entice students' learning with connections to their previous and current experiences. Even though it is easier for teachers to simply tell students about the facts of life and what should be learned, real learning takes place when students discover for themselves the meaningfulness of knowledge.

2.9.2. Synectics: As getting closer by stepping away from the problem

Synectics asserts stepping away from the subject to find a possible solution. Gordon and his partner Tony Poze studied synectics and creative thinking for many decades. In 1981 both the researchers asserted that most creative people allow themselves to brainstorm and follow a subconscious pattern. Unfortunately most people, even the creative ones are not able to articulate their minds processes when arriving at a breakthrough answer (Meador, 2000). Studies found out that individuals must disassociate themselves from the problem before they can find a solution.

2.9.3. Can Creative Thinking be developed?

Skinner (1954) suggests that subjects like English language, social studies, science and Math do not promote thinking. However, such classes are a great way to explore problems. Suggestion has often been made that thoughtfulness can be promoted in the classroom by presenting students with valid problems in the given context. However, based on what has already been discussed, it is clear that thoughtful participation can be effective in areas where the more traditional problem solving techniques are inappropriate. Such situations can be organized to promote curiosity and to have an aesthetic impact on students. (Cope, 2012).

2.9.4. Synectics as a Tool for Creative writing

The synectics model emphasizes the use of metaphors as catalysts for creative thinking (Gunter *et al*., 1999). Gunter explains that students taught through this model engage in structured activities that reveal conflicts between ideas, fostering creative thought. These activities use analogies to link new concepts with existing knowledge. While primarily focused on creativity, researchers argue that synectics also holds potential for enhancing creative writing (Marran & Rogan, 1966). Topkaya (2017) highlighted synectics' ability to connect real-world experiences with creative writing. Gordon demonstrated how synectics mechanisms enable metaphorical thinking, a process many students are already familiar with. Incorporating these mechanisms into instruction effectively introduces metaphors into writing. However, innovation in writing education requires collective efforts from teachers, policymakers, and curriculum

developers. Encouragingly, many developing countries are beginning to take steps in this area, signaling positive progress for education (Randazoo, 2012).

3. Conclusion and Discussion

Creative writing is a critical skill that fosters cognitive development, enhances self-expression, and improves communication abilities. It integrates various skills such as planning, editing, and reviewing, making it essential for academic and personal growth. In education, creative writing encourages students to think imaginatively, refine their writing process, and develop problem-solving skills. Despite its importance, many educators face challenges in teaching creative writing, particularly in regions like Pakistan, where confusion about its nature hinders effective instruction. The use of techniques like mind mapping and story mapping can help structure students' thoughts, making writing more accessible and enjoyable. Creative thinking, supported by models like Synectics, can be nurtured to boost creativity in students, making writing a skill that evolves with practice and guidance. challenges in teaching creative writing arise due to unclear understanding and a lack of structured instructional methods, especially in contexts like Pakistan. Techniques like mind mapping and story mapping provide valuable frameworks, aiding students in organizing ideas and understanding story structure, making the writing process more manageable and engaging. These strategies, aligned with creativity models like Synectics, encourage innovative thinking and enhance the learning experience. The effectiveness of these methods, however, depends on teachers' ability to integrate them effectively, highlighting the need for well-prepared educators to create an inclusive, motivating environment for students to develop strong writing skills.

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