

Once Upon A Time: A Framework for Developing Creative Writing in ESP and EAP

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ABSTRACT

Creativity is useful for enriching the quality of learning (Maley, 2015). Using English for creative learning purposes is essential for studying on various university degree courses. Writing is potentially considered as the most important skill although it is a difficult skill for Second Language (SL) learners to master (Nunan, 1999). One of the possible reasons for this is that it has not been well-emphasized and developed in English language materials (Alkhalidi, 2014; Tomlinson, 2015). This study focuses on writing, particularly, creative writing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. The main purpose of an ESP course and EAP course is to improve traditional and technical writing skills for students, and this might be at the expense of creative writing. This study explores creative writing and its possible challenges. It also discusses the significance of creativity, creativity and the language learner, creativity and motivation, creative writing, and the role of creative writing in ESP/EAP. Finally, it elaborates and recommends a systematic, principled framework based on a review of the related literature for developing creative writing in ESP/EAP courses.

Key words: Writing, Creative Writing, Creativity, Creative Writing Framework

INTRODUCTION

As English language is used as a medium of instruction at many universities in Arab world countries, linguists and materials writers have provided the field with well-developed techniques and input to master the language properly (e.g., Seow, 2002; Alkhalidi, 2014). Writing plays a crucial role in developing critical and creative thinking skills which can positively influence learning the language and learning other courses. Notably, writing can motivate thinking and learning the language in a creative way; it can help learners to organize their ideas well, and it can develop their critical thinking abilities such as summarizing, analyzing, and criticizing (Rao, 2007). In other words, writing has a significant impact on criticality and creativity.

Colyar (2009) posits that “writing is not simply what we ‘do’ but also how we become better writers and scholars” (p.421). Writing skills are one of the most essential skills in the education process at universities, especially in the field of ESP and EAP. English writing courses are compulsory for all university students in many colleges and departments as writing is necessary when they study their own core courses in English. Writing courses are usually offered to improve students’ writing abilities, and the main focus is on improving traditional writing or technical writing skills. Creative writing, however, may not be adequately emphasized in such courses. This may be due to the fact that creative writing is beyond the university degree requirements or students’ capabilities.

Maley (2015) has discussed the difference between expository writing and creative writing. He asserts that expository writing is set upon standardized rules and conventions, whereas creative writing is generally more artistic and explores expressions of thoughts and emotions. Universities or instructors may, therefore, prefer to deal with the basics of traditional writing and/or technical writing rather than creative writing. There are numerous potential reasons for this such as the difficulty of dealing with creativity, the fact that exams can assess more easily traditional and technical writing, and the lack of awareness of the importance of creative writing. It is noticeable that non-English major students believe that English is only needed for communicative purposes; therefore, they may lack awareness of the importance of creative writing in learning the language itself, and how it can develop their thinking skills for other courses or other purposes. Other possible reasons for prioritizing traditional and technical writing and overlooking creative writing are:

- The policies and constraints of some universities.
- Study plans set by different department heads of engineering, science, medicine, business amongst others who are not specialists in English language; consequently, they do not include creative writing courses in the degree’s requirements.
- Instructors may lack the expertise in how to deal with creative writing.
- Students may not have experience in how to write creatively in SL.

Writing has a key role not only in learning the language for communicative purposes, but also in learning it for other purposes such as developing creativity for lifelong learning. However, creative writing has not been well-emphasized in the curriculum, especially in ESP and EAP courses. Therefore, this article elaborates the significance of creativity and creative writing in ESP and EAP, and it suggests a systematic, principled framework for teaching creative writing in such courses.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CREATIVE WRITING STUDY

Creativity is an intrinsic element of language learning which is often overlooked. It is a skill which is ever present and ever needed. Furthermore, the continuous new developments in the world require universities and researchers to prepare students creatively for the future. According to Maley (2015):

Creativity helps us to deal with change, and as the world changes ceaselessly, so will more creative solutions be needed... Linguistic creativity in particular is so much part of learning and using a language that we tend to take it for granted. Yet from the ability to formulate new utterances, to the way a child tells a story, to the skill of a stand-up comedian, to the genius of a Shakespeare, linguistic creativity is at work. p.9

Papalazarou (2015) maintains that thinking creatively plays a significant role in societal development and culture, hence it is desirable to incorporate it into English language teaching. It seems that there is a scarcity of the related research about creative writing for ESP and EAP, especially at many Arab universities. This article, therefore, sheds light on the importance of creative writing for ESP and EAP, its associated challenges, and benefits. Creative writing has a significant impact on learners who use English as a medium of instruction in their studies. For example, it helps the learners to promote their creative thinking skills for short and long-term purposes, and it helps them to develop their English language competencies.

CREATIVITY

The term 'creativity' has been defined by many scholars from different fields. This study focuses on definitions written by scholars from the field of English language, literature, and linguistics. The majority of linguists define it as something created for the first time which has not existed before or creating something unique or outstanding. Read (2015) indicates that creativity is usually described as thinking 'out of the box', coming up with original ideas and new solutions to problems. Maley (2015) argues that creating new things are at the heart of creativity. He maintains that "Creativity is widely believed to be about letting the imagination loose in an orgy of totally free self-expression. It is, of course, no such thing. Creativity is born of discipline and thrives in a context of constraints" (p.6).

In Tomlinson, Arnold, Bolitho, Ellis, Lutzker, Maley, Masuhara and Pugliese (2015), Tomlinson argues that "creativity involves transcending the conventional norm. This

could result in something universally unique or just in something which has never been done in that context before" (What does creativity mean to me, para. 1). Arnold asserts that creativity is a movement from the known to the unknown. Lutzker maintains that creativity will develop only if it is practiced.

The researcher of this study argues that creativity does not necessarily mean something completely new. Notably, the created item or piece of literature might have existed before; however, it is the way in which it is used or developed that might be creative. For example, a piece of writing can be re-imagined or introduced in a unique way. With regards to an ESL learner, they can develop their life story into an imaginative and creative short story using figurative language and symbolic names. This requires connecting creativity with students' previous knowledge or experience upon which they can build. In other words, creating things differently might be an accessible way to stimulate creativity in second language learners' writing abilities since they build on their own previous experience creatively. Furthermore, feelings, experience and creative ideas might work together to motivate the learners to stretch their imagination towards creativity.

CREATIVITY AND THE LANGUAGE LEARNER

Papalazarou (2015) suggests that creativity is not only about the end result, the product, but also the process. Therefore, the role of instructors is to raise learners' awareness of creativity, train them using an appropriate process, and the role of the learners is to practice creative writing and produce creative pieces of writing. In other words, the learners are not only the center of the traditional teaching and learning process, but they are also the center of the creative teaching and learning process. Rosenberg (2015) argues that learners have values, experiences, ideas and thoughts, and they are considered as a creativity resource that should be developed well inside and outside the classroom.

As a foreign language learner of English at schools and universities, and as an instructor of English at schools and universities in different Arab countries, the researcher argues that the learner is one of the key elements of the creative education process who should be motivated adequately to use English as a SL creatively. His profession in teaching English as a SL encouraged him to start researching techniques and methods for promoting creativity. He conducted research in 2014-2015 with a colleague in Abu Dhabi in which they found that creative writing was not promoted in the offered courses. The results of their study also showed that memorization was the focus of the students rather than creativity (Alkhaldi & Benagoun, 2015). Therefore, there might be several justifications for focusing on memorization at the expense of creativity, and one of the possible justifications is that the students might have needed motivation to write creatively.

CREATIVITY AND MOTIVATION

Motivation is the key to success in creativity. If learners are not well-motivated, creativity may not be achieved. Deep

knowledge and playful use of that knowledge are required for creativity to produce new connections, solution paths, and forms of expression (Pugliese, 2012). Knowing how to use that knowledge in a motivational way is a skill for promoting creativity. Therefore, motivation is the key to success for creative writing. The development of creativity can increase the learner's engagement and motivation in learning a foreign language, and make the learning of the language enjoyable and memorable (Read, 2015). Moreover, Lutzker (2015) argues that "creative writing encourages a sense of playfulness, as well as a degree of affective engagement which is intrinsically motivating and can be highly satisfying" (Creative Writing, para. 7). In other words, writing tasks and activities should be interesting, engaging, and creative.

Arnold (2015) argues that effective learning takes place in an emotionally positive setting and that learning using creativity enhances the learning (in Tomlinson et al, 2015). Without intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, learning and creativity may not be achieved effectively. In teaching and learning English as a SL, motivation is essential to stimulate learners to be creative and active learners of the language. However, extrinsic motivation might work well in some cases in the SL learning environment, such as conducting competitions locally or internationally.

Providing a friendly environment for learning will motivate the learners to be creative. Moreover, the language materials can play a significant role in providing the opportunities for creativity, but they do not help the learners to think creatively and critically at the highest level (Alkhalidi, 2014; Tomlinson, 2015). In other words, the language materials should provide appropriate opportunities and activities, the instructors should appropriately process them in a systematic, principled way, and the learners should practice the language creatively, especially creative writing.

CREATIVE WRITING

Creative writing is an important life skill for short and long-term purposes. Listening to and telling stories are at the heart of most creative writing activities (Lutzker, 2015). Lutzker maintains that stories are an essential part, and they have a decisive effect on shaping the imaginative life of young learners which exert long-term consequences on their life when they become adults.

Wright (2015) indicates that stories are a huge potential for learning the language effectively when English is used as a SL. Heathfield (2015) maintains that the enjoyable and practical activities help the students to improve confidence and fluency in personal storytelling; therefore, the students believe in their creative stories, and they simultaneously learn to use English for creative communicative purposes. In other words, writing stories helps learners to develop their creativity and imagination for future learning purposes, and it can have wide-ranging implications in learning a SL. Consequently, the learners will improve their language learning and other thinking skills which can serve ESP and EAP courses and other courses in different programs.

Maley (2015) identifies numerous benefits associated with creativity ranging from an increase in self-esteem,

confidence to feeling more 'alive'. Hanci-Azizogl (2018) revealed in her study that, after using the poetic function of language, she experienced progress in her writing due to the following factors:

- The author felt encouraged to use her second language in more advanced and sophisticated styles as a result of trying to use the creative function of her second language in figurative ways that she had never tried.
- Searching for solutions to write creatively in her second language allowed the multilingual author to discover new literary lexical and semantic connotations, and this process improved her style by enriching her vocabulary choice.
- The author gained metacognitive awareness in order to express herself in more meaningful ways because using the creative function of her second language pushed her boundaries to use words out of their daily ordinary meanings.

(p.1)

There are related articles and conference papers which discuss creative writing; however, creative writing in ESP and EAP has not been researched well. Moran (2008), for example, argues that if engineering students are presented with literature by fellow engineers, it can motivate them to read literature as well as write it. In other words, there is a significant role for creative writing in the SL which has not been well-elaborated, in which this study is trying to achieve.

THE ROLE OF CREATIVE WRITING IN ESP AND EAP

The role of creative writing in the field of ESP and EAP has been largely overlooked, apart from few related studies and conference papers (e.g., Alkhalidi & Benaggoun, 2015; Moran, 2008). Moran (2008), for example, indicates that many engineers are successful in literature, but it is not widely known. Engineers are creative in their fields, simultaneously they are creative in imagination, and they are capable to 'engineer' the words and elements of short stories. Not only the engineers are creative in their fields and writing short stories, but also many other different specializations and college students are creative in their fields and in creative writing. Alkhalidi and Benaggoun (2015) also conducted related research. They found that the students did not take creative writing seriously while they were studying at their university. One of the possible reasons for such a finding was that they did study creative writing, or creative writing was not included in their courses.

Cushman (2015) argues that "acts of storytelling are inseparably entangled with acts of accessing technical breakdowns, determining possible problems, and then producing acceptable solutions. For these technicians, writing stories and fixing cars intertwine" (p.189). Therefore, creative writing can complement technical subjects such as engineering as they are two sides of the same coin. However, as this study identifies, there are potentially some challenges that may prevent practicing creative writing in ESP and EAP courses, as discussed below.

THE CHALLENGES

There are possible challenges that face creativity, particularly creative writing in ESP and EAP. It is a strange paradox that creativity is key to learning yet institutions, which outwardly embrace creativity, in reality resist it in favor of control and conformity (Maley, 2013). He asserts that that teaching is a conservative profession, and the institutionalization of teaching into regular classes encourages the development of comfortable routines. He maintains that exams also encourage conformity. However, teachers may have training in how to process the creative writing, and learners can practice creative writing both inside and outside the classroom. If creative writing is included in the curriculum and tested well in the exams, there will be good practice and quality of learning for students.

A further challenge is the publishers who may impose constraints on materials writers to avoid any creative risks since their main motive is to sell their 'commercial textbooks' at the expense of learning and development of creative and critical thinking skills (Alkhaldi, 2014). This shows that the materials do not provide the learners with creative tasks and activities to practice creative writing.

In addition to the challenges associated with the education system, there are challenges related to the SL learners and their environment. For example, writing itself in SL is considered difficult by many learners, and, likewise, the fact that some instructors may believe that creative writing is beyond some learners' levels. Elbelazi (2015) notes that there is a widely held belief that, prior to enjoying either the reading or writing of literature, the student has to have studied the language.

The environment of language learning is not rich or stimulating for learning English language skills, particularly writing skills. One possible reason for this is that English is used within a limited context which is the classroom although it is sometimes used widely at university where English is used as a medium of instruction as is the case for some Arab universities. As a result, the learners usually complain about the difficulty of writing, and their inability of writing short stories. To summarize the challenges that face creativity:

- The constraints of some education systems
- Priority for control, measurement and conformity of the education system
- Examinations promote standardization
- The prescribed syllabi and the allotted time to cover the requested chapters or topics
- Lack of awareness and experience of instructors
- Lack of interest or motivation of instructors and learners
- The difficulty of writing
- The education environment
- Lack of practice
- The textbook publishers' constraints

Such challenges should be taken into consideration when creative writing is integrated in ESP and EAP courses. Creative writing can be developed appropriately in ESP and EAP since English is used intensively in teaching and assessing courses of different specializations. If creative writing is taught well by the instructors and practiced appropriately by

the learners, the learners' creative abilities will be developed effectively. The researcher suggests a framework for developing creative writing in ESP and EAP courses.

A FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING SHORT STORIES

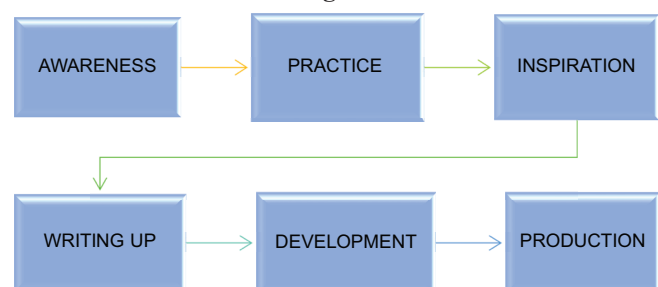
While teaching creativity *per se* is impossible, teachers should incorporate creative methods into their lessons in order to foster creativity in learners (Maley, 2015). Pugliese (in Tomlinson et al, 2015) suggests four strategies:

- Simplicity: using the people as the main resource, and trying to work with minimum materials or without materials.
- Combination: it involves a blend of the learners' own creativity with someone else's.
- Risk-taking: leaving the comfort zone and stepping into the learning zone.
- Playfulness: the ability to play.

Furthermore, traditional language learning coursebooks are not based on creative engagement (Lutzker, 2015), and they do not develop creative thinking skills appropriately (Alkhaldi & Oshchepkova, 2018). Consequently, there is a need for a systematic, principled framework to develop the learners' abilities in creative writing. Read (2015), for example, argues that learners need a framework for developing creative thinking skills. She maintains that the framework delimits the scope of the activities, and it allows the learners to concentrate on their ideas.

This study suggests a framework which can be integrated into ESP and EAP courses to enable learners to engage in learning the language and developing their thinking skills. The suggested framework, which is based on the findings from the literature review, can be used for writing short stories creatively. It can be implemented inside the classroom, and the practice can be continued outside the classroom to develop creative writing of short stories. The framework consists of six steps, and the following flowchart presents them:

The Framework for Writing Short Stories



AWARENESS

Raising awareness is a very important step. The instructors need to raise the learners' awareness about the benefits of creative writing. They also need to build trust and motivate the learners to start thinking creatively about their pieces of writing, especially creative writing (see 'Creativity and the

language learner' section). Wright (2015) argues that the awareness of the characteristics of the available materials can lead to fresh and efficient ideas. Maley (2015) indicates that it is crucial to encourage an environment of trust between instructors and learners to foster creativity. He maintains that the instructors should convince their learners that everyone has the capacity for creativity.

PRACTICE

After raising awareness and stimulating the learners, the instructors are advised to start discussing the main elements of a story such as the setting, plot, conflicts and characters. They should also allow students to read some samples to understand the process deeply. It is important to use the materials as a resource rather than follow them literally to develop the confidence, awareness and creativity (Tomlinson, 2015). Lutzker (2015) indicates that learners should develop their language skills in reading literature and creative writing, and they should have enough opportunities to practise reading literature and writing creatively. In other words, when the students experience English rather than studying it only, their learning of the language will be memorable and meaningful (Wright, 2015).

In this stage, students may work individually, in pairs, or in groups (based on their levels) and start discussing the main elements of their own story. It is recommended that students should have a target and audience in their minds to write purposefully and effectively within specific guidelines provided by their instructors. Continuous training workshops should be conducted to enable students to practice creative writing in the classroom which they can continue at home or in the library. The instructors should introduce small changes from time to time, and they should allow time for activities and discussions (Maley, 2015). He maintains that if the instructors want the learners to get benefits from creative activities, they should practice creative writing outside the classrooms.

INSPIRATION

It is helpful to provide the learners with a model or build up an example outcome with the whole class first to be used as a source of inspiration for providing the necessary language support (Read, 2015). The learners should continue reading short stories for inspiration and writing their drafts. Then they use their imagination to write about the setting, characters, plot, theme, conflict, and the other elements. They will be inspired by stories, their experience, movies, amongst other sources and thereby expanding their imagination. They may also connect their imagination with their personal interests or reflect on societal needs or values. For example, some learners may look for the ideal place to live, solutions for societal problems, chronic diseases, and so on.

Tomlinson (2015) argues that the teachers should foster learner creativity to develop learners' predictive, analytical, critical and problem-solving skills, to develop self-esteem and to develop confidence. In other words, inspiration is very important to foster the learner creativity. Therefore, the instructors may start inspiring their students from the

beginning of the creative writing classes till the end. This step gives some flexibility to the framework, and it may be used at any stage or in all stages.

WRITING UP

In this stage, learners are encouraged to prepare drafts of their stories. Wright (2015) indicates that the students can "create an imaginary soap opera with locality and people who live there.... During the first few weeks of learning, the people can be named, given ages, jobs, likes and dislikes, etc. At higher language proficiency levels, they can have more subtle relationships and take part in more complicated situations" (p. 18). Rosenberg (2015) argues that the students have knowledge of other cultures and languages which can be exploited with a variety of creative activities. Rosenberg maintains that the instructors can encourage risk-taking and the joy of play to learn the language effectively and enjoy the process of creative writing.

It is advised to use "heuristics at all levels... Rather than applying a formula with a pre-determined outcome (an algorithm), heuristics work by trying things to see how they work out" (Maley, 2015, p. 10). Giving the learners the opportunity to discover things on their own and learning from their own experience will be useful for them to produce an original, creative piece of work. Maley maintains that the instructors are advised to use the 'constraints principle' by imposing tight constraints on the activities. They should also encourage the students to collect data, pictures, and stories to be used later. The students can use different tools such as taking pictures by themselves, drawing pictures, or editing pictures. They may need to use their prepared pictures when they publish their stories.

The instructors should provide guidelines about the process of writing short stories and their designs (e.g., formatting, pictures, number of pages and words, amongst others). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that culturally sensitive issues need to be taken into consideration and avoided as much as possible, especially in some Arab countries.

DEVELOPMENT

The students continue writing and developing their stories inside and outside the classroom. Feedback is provided to the learners from time to time, and the learners should respond to their instructors' feedback and guidelines to develop their stories. The students should be encouraged to believe that they are able to improve their stories and achieve better outcomes thorough hard work and persistence (Read, 2015). The instructors should encourage their students to discuss their stories together in a friendly manner (Maley, 2015). The students need to be motivated intrinsically and/or extrinsically at all stages to keep in high spirits and energy. The feedback should be constructive leading to creative pieces of writing.

PRODUCTION

The learners prepare the final draft of the short story as a soft copy using suitable software. They can work towards

printing out their stories following the guidelines which are provided by their instructors. The instructors need to ensure that the work of the learners is published in books, magazines or websites (Maley, 2015). In other words, the creative writing of the learners should be shown up for other learners or universities since their production is invaluable.

Storytelling is also a good opportunity for the learners to show their creative work. Heathfield (2015), for example, argues that it is important to give the students the opportunity to tell their stories in the classrooms and the other students should be encouraged to listen to their classmates through developing some creative tasks. As a result, the learners will have a basis for the development of more sophisticated, conceptual and creative thinking in the future (Read, 2015).

To sum up, the above framework, which is based on the related literature, can be applied in a systematic way to help the learners develop their creative writing skills in ESP and EAP courses. Instructors can adapt the framework appropriately to achieve the purpose of using it. Learners have the ability to be creative writers which can have a positive impact for future lifelong learning purposes. In other words, learners from different specializations can utilize the creative writing process in an attempt to develop their language skills and develop their creativity in English courses and other core courses. They can also develop their thinking skills more creatively for future academic and employment purposes.

CONCLUSION

Literature and creative writing are emphasized in foreign language teaching and learning (Lutzker, 2015). However, it is not well-emphasised in ESP and EAP courses at many universities. Creativity is a key skill needed for effective learning, and it is essential for meeting the needs of any market. This study has focused on creativity, creative writing, and the associated challenges in ESP and EAP. It sheds light on creative writing in English courses for students who study different specializations at universities. Consequently, it has introduced and elaborated a systematic framework for writing creative short stories based on the related literature.

The framework can be used as a database for present and future education purposes. For example, it can help students to develop their English language skills in English courses while they study at the universities. It can also develop their creativity in other courses which can be reflected positively on the quality of teaching and learning and their averages. Furthermore, the private and public sectors generally prefer to hire new employees of the graduates who have excellent communication skills in English and creative abilities. Therefore, the students, who practice creative writing using a systematic, principled framework, will have good employment opportunities in the future.

The framework can also be used for professional development purposes. The instructors can have training workshops in how to use the framework and teach creative writing. They, for example, can use it to develop their learners' language skills effectively and improve their creative abilities.

They can also have insights while they reflect on the framework. Moreover, the framework is flexible, and the instructors may adapt it and rearrange the steps of the framework. For example, they may inspire their learners after they raise their awareness and before they practice writing according to their students' levels, needs, and interests.

The students can also utilize the framework and practice creative writing to develop their language skills and creativity with the help of their instructors. The students who are specialized in different university specializations and study ESP or EAP courses, can become creative writers in English as a SL if they are given the adequate training and opportunities to practice writing short stories. As a result, they will improve their language competences, confidence, and creative thinking skills for lifelong learning purposes. The researcher recommends that creative writing needs to be rethought in the institutions and integrated in English courses, or it could be offered in separate courses to achieve the ultimate outcome of using it (effective language learning and well-developed creative thinking skills).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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