Using Creative Writing as a Bridge to Enhance Academic Writing

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**Abstract**

Creative writing is a vital tool and a natural bridge for good academic writing. This paper first examines why it has not been used as a main component in English as a Second Language programs, and then goes on to demonstrate how important and necessary creative writing is in order to help language learners in higher education become more effective writers. The benefits in intermediate and advanced classes are offered along with some limitations in its use. Since instituting creative writing in the author’s department, the exit writing assessment test scores at his Intensive English Program (IEP) have substantially increased, and ESL learners have begun to enjoy writing at a higher cognitive level.

**Introduction**

For decades, the basic skills that have been taught in most, if not all, ESL programs have been grammar, writing, reading, speaking and listening. Every once in a while creative writing assignments are given in writing classes, but there are very few actual creative writing *programs* or *courses* for ESL learners. I would like to argue that creative writing is both the most natural and logical component for all ESL programs, as it helps students become better writers and thinkers for their academic programs; that is, it is a key element for student success in academic writing. Moreover, creative writing offers language learners a strong sense of confidence in developing a love for and an interest in writing. It should also be pointed out that not much literature has been produced on creative writing in ESL programs, save perhaps a 2006 article by James and a 2012 webinar by Spiro. The present article is thus on the pedagogical vanguard with respect to second language acquisition in writing classrooms.

**Background**

Since the initiation of the first ESL program, writing, at any level, has been considered an essential skill, but the writing involved has almost always been academic writing. Students are most often asked to write on academic topics and structure their paragraphs and essays to fit the kind that they will most likely use in an English speaking institution of higher learning. Given this, there are two major challenges that they immediately face. First, students are asked to write in a style with which they are, in many cases, completely unfamiliar. Second, many of the topics that instructors give them are also unfamiliar. For example, they might be asked to write on immigration policies, life on other planets, or to critique their own religion. These are often problematic topics because the students have not entertained the subjects in the past, or they feel that they cannot discuss them due to personal biases. We, as instructors, are not only asking them to perform a skill in an unfamiliar way, but we are also asking them to write on topics with which they are equally unfamiliar.
One of the biggest difficulties that almost all ESL writers encounter is the problem of idea development in their paragraphs and essays. It is interesting to point out that this is not necessarily limited to ESL learners; domestic students struggle with this as well (Goatly, 2000; Wiener, 1981).

Most, if not all, intermediate and advanced ESL writers are fine at the sentence level, but once they go beyond that, they encounter problems with idea development and organization. Let us take the most challenging part of the academic paragraph—the example or section of support. The majority of students are able to produce a legitimate topic sentence, provide a transition and sometimes give a reason of support. However, they find it arduous to write an example that shows the reader that they have an in depth command and sense of ownership of the topic.

This is where using creative writing is both helpful and more natural because students are asked to write on familiar topics based on their own memories and experiences, and they are asked to write them in a way that is more comfortable and intimate. Despite this, it is often the case that most American ESL programs avoid doing creative writing on a regular basis. If they do actually use creative writing, it is done on an infrequent basis such as an occasional warm-up activity or an end-of-the-week activity on Fridays. Granted, one can find a number of creative writing prompts on the Internet, but there are really no creative writing programs or courses for ESL learners. Hence, the obvious question is posed, Why is something so natural and beneficial not being used in the ESL classroom? The answer to this can be found in four arguments that are common at many university-based ESL institutions.

The first argument is what I call The Lazy Sheep Argument. It uses the following line of reasoning. Premise one: No major university ESL program in the U.S. offers exclusive creative writing classes. Premise two: This (the particular institute) is a major ESL program. It is then concluded that the school in question does not offer creative writing. This argument is obviously weak due to the simple fact that there are some institutions that do offer creative writing classes. So, it is shortsighted to claim that “No major schools” teach it. Moreover, it is essentially stating the age-old fallacy of, “If I do not see it, then it does not exist.”

The second argument I refer to as The Blind Border Argument. It goes something like this. Premise one: ESL students have not done creative writing in their home countries. Premise two: Most likely they do not want to do it at their current ESL institute. They are only interested in academic writing. The conclusion is creative writing is not offered because there is no need to offer it. Again, it is not fair to say that students have not done creative writing in their home countries, for, in my experience, a number of students have done it and do actually enjoy it. I have had students from Western Europe and China who enjoyed creative writing in their respective native universities and came to the U.S. with hopes of doing creative writing in their ESL classes.

To instantiate my claim, I conducted a short survey at the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL) at Southern Illinois University Carbondale to ask the ESL students about creative writing. Thirty students participated in this survey, and their levels ranged from low intermediate to advanced (See selected survey questions in Table 1).

It follows, then, that this survey, as well as those I have given in the past at other institutes, clearly refutes the above Blind Border Argument. Despite the argument, it
appears that (a) students are aware of the benefits of creative writing, and (b) they would like to see such classes at their own respective institute.

Table 1. *ESL Student Responses to Creative Writing Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Survey Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Creative writing is important for university students.</em></td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* I wish there were a creative writing course at CESL.*</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Creative writing helps develop my own ideas, thoughts and writing.*</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third frequent argument that directors of ESL programs give I term *The What Is In It For Me Argument*. Premise one states that ESL students will not use creative writing at the university. Premise two claims that ESL institutes are academic programs for university preparation. The conclusion is that there is no need for ESL students to do creative writing because it is not done at the university or college level. To belie this argument, I conducted a survey that asked 25 professors from a number of universities in Arizona, California, Illinois and Wisconsin what they thought about creative writing and its relation to critical thinking (See selected survey questions in Table 2). The respondents were from the following departments: pre-medical, management, finance, economics, history, accounting, English, comparative literature, drama, modern languages, philosophy and religious studies. 75% of the respondents were male and 25% were female. The ages of the respondents varied, ranging from 35 to 65. Another intriguing factor is that a significant number of the respondents were not native to the U.S. Below is a sampling of the survey.

Table 2. *Professor Responses to Creative Writing and Critical Thinking Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Survey Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#4: I think that creative writing ought to be taught in ESL Programs.</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5: Creative writing enhances students’ minds and helps them with critical thinking.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7: I use creative writing in my classes.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9: I think if students had creative writing, they would write better papers and more critical pieces in my class.</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is notable here is that only a small percentage of the respondents were from English departments. So, contrary to the premise that “students will not use creative writing,” the professors in this survey seem to think and do the opposite. Perhaps what is even more striking is that the professors from MBA programs and philosophy and religious studies departments are the biggest proponents of creative writing. They see it as an essential tool in the development of their students’ critical thinking and writing skills.

The fourth and final argument I term The Frustrated Sisyphus Argument. Premise one states: There is not enough time to teach creative writing. Premise two claims: We need to meet deadlines and stay within the system’s curriculum. And hence the conclusion runs: Therefore, we cannot teach creative writing. (See also Spiro, 2012.) This argument is conceivably the only one that is acceptable based on the rigor and aim of current ESL programs. Of course, if creative writing is not used as a bridge, the perennial problems and difficulties of academic writing for ESL learners will continue to be a central challenge.

The above four arguments, coupled with the core problems that non-native writers face, are the main reasons why creative writing is not taught as a major skill at American ESL institutes. I have, however, set up three different creative writing programs at three different institutions. Each one has been successful and flourished for three simple reasons.

First, the students gained confidence in their writing and consequently became better writers, manipulating the tools they acquired to produce stronger and more controlled writing. That is, the students began to use more substantial vocabulary, colorful yet concise in nature. Their grammar mistakes were also noticeably reduced. But most importantly, they were able to develop their ideas in a more detailed, profound and coherent manner. They could start to see how ideas build off of one another and how ideas support each other in a tight and logical fashion. As above, ESL students have a problem with developing the examples in their paragraphs. This issue was also solved—not completely, but substantial progress has been made.

Second, the writing exit test scores increased considerably. At my current ESL institute, about 50% to 60% of the students would pass from level four to level five. After instituting an intensive creative writing program (explained below) the percentages increased from 80% to 85%, and, in some cases, the percent of students moving from level four to level five has been up to 90%. Furthermore, the exit test graders have noted a dramatic improvement in these students’ language control, vocabulary knowledge and willingness to be risk-takers. (For more on risk-taking and ownership of skills, see Medina, 2009.)

The third reason why I consider these creative writing programs to be successful cannot be measured in terms of statistics, but nonetheless I find it a significant point that needs to be acknowledged. These are the positive testimonies of my former students. According to my students who have gone on to enter American undergraduate and graduate programs, creative writing helped them learn to “play with the language,” “appreciate the language,” and “view it as a living thing that grows.” These comments have come from students who have now successfully entered or completed their respective degree at an American university. They claim that although they might not go
on to attempt an MFA, they have come to understand how creative writing strengthened their minds and made them better thinkers.

To reiterate, I believe the fundamental reasons why creative writing is not used more in the ESL classroom is because the majority of the schools have simply not tried to implement it in their curriculum, and have thus not seen its functionality; and second, there have not been enough studies on creative writing and its effectiveness on ESL learners and their writing development. The benefits of this skill, however, are many, and I encourage other writing instructors and ESL programs to set up similar classes for both the benefit of the students and the future of language pedagogy.

Implementation

The perfect scenario is to have a full course dedicated exclusively to creative writing in order for it to have its full effect on the students. I will use my current institute as a working example, which is based on an eight-week term schedule. For the reader to understand why I set this system up, let me explain what the major problem was with the students at a particular level. Students in level four, the intermediate level, had always been asked to write paragraphs and essays before moving on to level five, the advanced writing class. They, however, tended to struggle in both levels, primarily because their command of writing skills was weak, they lacked confidence in writing, they were not comfortable with the skill, and they had difficulty in developing their ideas on the topics, particularly, as stated above, in the example on the support section of the body paragraphs in their essays. Simply put, level four was not sufficiently preparing the students for level five.

I proposed a pilot program for the intermediate level in which the students would exclusively emerge themselves in a creative writing program. The premise behind this program was that creative writing is ‘natural’ because it is based on the learners’ own memories and experiences (see also Spiro, 2012), while academic writing is, to a certain degree, forced, unnatural, and often times unfamiliar. Moreover, the average domestic student has twelve years of American education before entering college or university. During that time, a number of creative writing assignments have been done on a wide range of topics. This, we are now finding out, thanks to neuroscience (Murphy Paul, 2012), has a huge impact on the verbal development of the language learner. On the other hand, most ESL learners jump right into the language classroom without having such a background. To compound matters, the topics they are given to write on are often abstract, unfamiliar, and host-culture centered. The theory behind my use of creative writing, then, is to help the ESL students catch up with their domestic university classmates.

In the first lesson of the intensive creative writing course, the students are introduced to the differences between creative and academic writing. This is crucial so that they understand why they are doing creative writing. It is common that at first the students complain, arguing that creative writing is not helpful because it is not what they will be asked to do in the advanced levels of their ESL classes, nor will they need it at the university. Thus, it is necessary to do a lesson on the similarities and differences of the two kinds of writing. For instance, both require a well-developed understanding of grammar and syntax; both require a logical development of ideas; both need to consider their audience; both use critical and creative thinking. In terms of the differences, creative
writing is more original whereas academic writing is more formulaic; creative writing relies on feelings and mood; academic writing relies more on research and sources. Ultimately, however, it is important for them to see that creative writing will help them with their academic writing, and this they will come to realize after they have been through a vast spectrum of creative writing exercises.

Although this is a creative writing focused class, the first assignment is to write an “academic paragraph” about why each students’ hometown is the best in the world. I do this for two significant reasons. First, the students feel that they are working on a style of writing that will help them in the future, so it puts them at ease. But more importantly, this kind of paragraph will be used in the second week in the students’ critiques of their classmates’ poetry. These paragraphs have the basic components needed for argumentative and critical work. That is, there is a topic sentence, a bridge or transition sentence, a reason of support, an example, and a conclusion. In the first paragraph, the students argue why their own hometown has the best beaches or the most intriguing natural scenery. In the second week, the students will use the same style of paragraph to argue why they like or dislike their classmates’ poetry. So, in short, this acts as a tool for the class.

In the second week, the students are introduced to breath poems. These are a specific kind of poem that I created for the ESL learner. Breath poems have a title and are comprised of only three short lines with a syllable count of three-three-four. The following is an example of a breath poem written by Francisco Javier Romano Ausin from Granada, Spain. He was a former student in the first creative writing class at Southern Illinois University Carbondale in the IEP.

Home

South of Spain;

Red, hot sun—

I’ll return soon!

The students first learn about syllables and how they work in English. It is, however, important not to make the students worry too much about the syllable count while they are writing the poems. They need to focus more on the imagery and expression of the poem (Koch, 1978; Randolph, 1985). So, if they have a breath poem with too many syllables, that is fine, for they will learn the art of using strong versus weak words and editing out unnecessary words. For example, the above poem was first written with the second line reading “the hot sun”. The student worked on this and took “the” out as he felt it was unnecessary and added “red” to make the line more descriptive. This is an example, albeit simple in content, of how the creative and critical mind begins to develop with creative writing (James, 2006; Koch, 1978; Randolph, 1985). The students work within the confines of a tight syllable structure, yet they understand how to make a poem more effective by “playing with” the language and rearranging the words (Randolph, 1985). Here the paramount element of creative writing is also subtly introduced; that is, students actually begin to enjoy writing and see how the language
works, how it evolves for them, and how they can make their ideas more effective and meaningful. Granted, it may only start with a breath poem, but as they move on and do other kinds of writing, they will understand how it helps them to become craftsmen at the skill.

After the students have written their poems, I try to read as many as possible aloud to the class. This provides a two-fold purpose: first, the students can learn to take stock in their poems and view their work as something to be taken seriously; and second, it fosters a sense of mutual respect among the classmates (Koch, 1978). Next, the students practice reading their poems aloud to each other in groups of three. This is where they learn about the “breathing” aspect of the poems. They inhale the first line, exhale the second line and both inhale and exhale while reading the last line. This allows them to get physically and emotionally invested in their work. The final part of this first poetry assignment is to have the students critique each other’s work. Here they revisit and use the academic paragraph in their critiques. They express what they liked or disliked in the topic sentence with a transition to the reason why they liked or disliked the poems. They give an example of what was good or bad with details and then write a conclusion. In addition, the students can use this opportunity to check any grammar they feel is misused as well. This assignment is a very useful one because there are so many integrated skills. And, as Gardner and Lambert (1972) have pointed out, the more integrated the skills are, the higher the quality of learning that takes place. (See also Brown, 2000.) This idea of integrating skills is echoed in Kumaravadivelu’s work, Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching. He makes a wonderful case for skill integration and argues that a separation of skills is an inadequate way of both teaching and learning a language, for “language skills are essentially interrelated and mutually reinforced” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 228).

From the above, we can already begin to see that the students are writing about ideas and thoughts that are directly related to them. (See also a similar occurrence in Routman, 2005.) Furthermore, they do this in a logical and developed manner, which helps them to gain confidence in their skills as writers (Maslow, 1962).

In the third week, the students do a similar activity. They work on a type of Japanese poem known as the tanka. This is a five-lined poem with a five-seven-five-seven syllable count. The students follow the same process as the breath poem activities by writing the poems, reading them aloud to their classmates, and then correcting any grammar before writing up their reviews or critiques.

In the fourth week, the students are introduced to the creative letter. This is essentially a persuasive or argumentative essay, but it takes the form of a personal letter. The first class devoted to this form of writing is a brainstorming session on various topics of interest. For example, when the earthquake hit Japan in the spring of 2011, many students wanted to write a creative letter to their fictitious company’s boss, requesting that he or she give them a month leave from work so that they could be of service to the people in Japan. Others wanted to write letters to their parents persuading them to let them travel to Japan to help the Japanese. The point of this assignment is two-fold. First, it helps the students become familiar with the basic format of the English essay; and second, it nurtures a sense of intrinsic interest in the topic, for the students have created their own topics. Again, this inspires them to ‘own’ their topics as they gradually begin to develop a confidence and interest in writing. Again, if they have not already done so, they
start to see creative writing as a practical tool to be used for their goal of becoming a better and more controlled writer for their future academic purposes.

The fifth week focuses on writing a short story or a children’s story. It is best to alternate one with the other each term. This activity helps the students to create believable characters and situations, and to develop a logical plot for their audience. At the same time, their stories are only three to four pages in length, so they need to narrow their ideas down and work on being as concise and yet as detailed as possible. These stories follow the aforementioned poetry writing process in that they first write the stories, read them aloud to their classmates, and then they write up their respective critiques. The students produce two to three revised drafts, trying to create and communicate the stories with a sense of concise coherence in their material. An effective follow-up to this is to have the students go to other ESL classes at the same institute to read their work, or you can go to a local daycare and read the stories to the children. Both activities are very memorable, effective, and help the writers take stock in their creations. Moreover, it gives them an experience of writing for and reading to a larger audience, something necessary in the development of every writer (Maley & Duff, 1994).

In the sixth week, it is a good idea to have the students work on narrative free verse. This allows them to continue to develop their creative side and simultaneously work on telling stories in a concise way through poetry. They also reuse the skills of working with the idea of strong words and vivid phrases in their writing. A good activity for this genre is to have the students write a free verse that is based on one of their earlier breath poems or tankas.

The seventh and eighth weeks culminate with writing a creative essay on a topic that the class agrees on as a whole. During the development of this last writing project, the students will see how all the previous skills they worked on come together and help them communicate their thoughts in an enhanced, logical, and organized way.

The Benefits of Creative Writing

Above, we looked at three major problems of ESL writers: first, they are asked to write in a style that they are not necessarily comfortable with; second, many topics on which they write are unfamiliar; and third, they have difficulty in developing their ideas in paragraphs and making the ideas coherent, clear, and organized. With the help of creative writing, these three difficulties are addressed and students seem to overcome their former issues with writing stylistics, critical thinking and the development of ideas.

For years, neuro researchers (Hortsman, 2011; Iacoboni, 2009; Jensen, 2008; Medina, 2009) have been telling us that the more we exercise the brain, the healthier it will become. Academic writing, with its formulaic style, is both rigid and limiting. However, with creative writing, students learn a number of ways to communicate their thoughts, and, at the same time, express their own originality in different forms of writing: poetry, short stories, creative letters, essays, peer reviews, and formal critiques. Therefore, creative writing, based on neuro research, is actually “healthier” than academic writing. Recent test results at my IEP also seem to support this. As above, the students who pass from level four to level five do so at a rate of 80% to 85%, and sometimes even as high as 90%. However, the students who have a research paper based class seem to have more difficulty passing the writing assessment—only 30% qualify for
the next level. Does pure academic writing hinder ESL student development? This small sampling of data seems to show it does.

Neuro research has also recently (2006, 2009) discovered that fiction excites and stimulates the brain more than academic literature (Murphy Paul, 2012). If this is true, then the use of creative writing, as a pedagogical tool, is the best way for ESL learners to acquire new vocabulary and sentence structures and to expand their command of the English essay. In fact, I would be willing to say that all language pedagogy should incorporate creative writing in its curriculum if it wishes to truly help the students learn the language in question.

In addition, current neurobiologists and psychologists claim that the more students work with multisensory learning environments, the better they will learn. Students who learn in multisensory environments always perform better than students who learn in unisensory environments (Mayers, 1987; Medina, 2009). Creative writing classrooms are the natural environments for such learning. The students entertain all five and sometimes six senses in their writing; this work with the senses brings the language to life, even if the senses are simply “imagined” (See also work on mirror neurons and imagination in Iacoboni, 2009).

This multisensory learning also assists in transferring vocabulary, stylistics, and syntax from short-term to long-term memory better than unisensory learning. It may seem counterintuitive, but the more the brain incorporates all the senses, the more it learns. Research has shown that the sensory processes are wired to work together (Medina, 2009). In short, the more you stimulate all the senses, the better learning environment you create for the language learner.

Peer reviews and critiques offer other significant benefits regarding this type of program. The students generally get used to critiquing each other’s work, whether that be poetry, short stories, or essays. The fact that they are able to critique different genres of writing helps them to develop critical thinking skills and exposes them to different kinds of critiques and the content therein.

One last benefit, which should rank among the most important, is the simple fact that the students gain a sense of control in their writing and feel an ownership of the language. This ultimately leads to a true sense of enjoying the art of writing. Medina claims that confidence breeds the likelihood of experimenting and risk-taking (Medina, 2009; Eagleman, 2011). It follows, then, that the confidence students gain in the creative writing classroom will motivate them to experiment with the language, take risks, play with the language, and inspire a realization that writing is a friend and not a foe. For once one has control of any skill, he or she begins to truly understand its purpose and have fun with it.

**Assessment**

The most obvious way in which to determine if creative writing is a legitimate tool or not is by measuring the outcome of the students’ scores on the writing assessment. As I mentioned briefly above, at my current institute, there is a writing assessment test given at the end of each eight-week term for all the students in the program. In order for the students of the intermediate level to move on, they need a four out of seven to pass. Before the creative writing program was instituted, the number of students who passed to the next level was lower than after I started the program. In general, 50% to 60% of the
intermediate students would pass the writing assessment. After the first creative writing course started, the numbers improved dramatically. Currently, 80% to 85% of the students pass the writing assessment, and, in some cases, I have had terms where up to 90% of the level four students move up to level five. It was after this substantial change in the test scores that the administration of the institute decided to permanently keep the creative writing program for the intermediate level writing class.

Another assessment element is that the readers of the writing assessment noted a better command of vocabulary and use of language among the creative writers as compared to the general academic writing classes. The creative writers started using more colorful vocabulary and taking more risks in their writing. For example, instead of using words like ‘nice,’ ‘beautiful, ‘difficult,’ and ‘good,’ they used vocabulary such as ‘delightful,’ ‘breathtaking,’ ‘arduous,’ and ‘embrace.’ Two simple sentences were more likely to be combined to form a compound sentence, and the writing, in general, possessed a richer sense of voice.

Perhaps the most telling form of assessment, however, is the personal student evaluation of the class that is given at the end of each term. This is a short questionnaire on the class and what the students feel they learned from the course. Although initially there are always one or two that feel creative writing is not important, by the end of the term they all believe that the class has made them more confident in their writing and helped them to write on a number of different topics in a number of different ways. In addition, they feel that writing is not just a skill that they need to use, but they see it as a critical tool that can help them communicate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings in an effective way (For a sampling of the responses, see Appendix A).

Limitations

Of all the language skills, writing is the most difficult, but it is also the most advanced, eloquent, and challenging. Writing takes all the other skills—speaking, listening, reading, grammar, error correction and thinking—rolls them up into one amazing universe of thought and expression.

It is truly the gift of the human species. This paper has tried to argue that creative writing is innately good for students, and it will help them in their academic careers with technical and academic writing. However, creative writing is not a magical pill that one takes and is immediately cured.

Like any skill, creative writing requires hard work and a lot of time to develop. Students who enter the intermediate writing class with below average grammar and writing skills tend to struggle more than their classmates who have better grammar, writing, and critical thinking skills.

One should also not mistake a creative person with the idea that he or she will be a good creative writer. In fact, science and math-minded students, such as civil engineers, biologists, chemists, and economists are sometimes the best creative writers. So, creative writing is only beneficial if the student is ready to think, accept mistakes, and learn from them in order to develop his or her skills.

Conclusion

For decades, creative writing has been ignored as a fundamental component for developing language learner skills in ESL institutes and intensive ESL programs (Spiro, 2012). This paper has argued that creative writing should not be used merely as a fun
activity for Friday classes; but rather, it should become an integral component for each and every ESL and EFL program. If a skill such as creative writing can get students excited about writing, learning, and developing their minds, then more students should be exposed to its helpful and effective attributes (Medina, 2009; Spiro, 2012). For creative writing is the logical bridge to academic writing as it nurtures the art of communicating the miraculous wonders within the human mind.

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References


Appendix A: Student Responses to Three Survey Questions from the Creative Writing Class

Question #1: Do you think this class helped improve your writing skills?

Yes No Explain:
(1) Yes. I was not able to write what I wanted to write easily, but now I can write.
(2) Yes. In the beginning of the term I didn’t know how to write an essay.
(3) Yes. Now I know how to write a poem, a letter, a story and an essay. Of course it helped.
(4) Yes! In the writing class I learned many things that improved my writing skills, such as stories, poems and essays.
(5) Yes! I was unable to write, but now I can! Thank you.

Question #2: Do you think that this class helped improve your thinking skills?

Yes No Explain:
(1) Yes. I took a lot of practice about thinking.
(2) Yes. Because when I wrote a short story or a creative essay, I had to deeply think in order to write.
(3) Yes. The homework the teacher gave every day expanded my mind.
(4) Yes. For sure! Because we learned in this class how to think when we read and when we write.
(5) Yes! Because now I am able to think and imagine the words as images.

Question #3: Would you recommend this class to a CESL classmate?

Yes No
(1) Yes.
(2) No.
(3) Yes, they should take and have such a fabulous class.
(4) Yes!
(5) Yes!