

BRINGING CREATIVE WRITING INTO THE EFL CLASSROOM AT UNIVERSITIES

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In my work as an English language lecturer at the Europa-Universität Flensburg in Germany, I have been developing a **Creative Writing class for EFL students** that revolves around a workshop and the pedagogy a workshop utilises. This class is offered to students studying their BA in Education with a specialisation in English. Many of them will go on to teach in primary or high school and their degree is tailored to that. Creative Writing is not a common offering in German universities in and of itself, nor is it commonly found in Practical English programs future English teachers must undertake. I have found it to be an excellent means of developing my students' relationship with English on a number of levels. With a focus on writing as a process, the workshop furthers critical thinking, close reading and active listening skills; acts as a conduit of culture, which is vital in the language classroom; and is a valuable tool for raising metalinguistic awareness in learners.

IN THE WORKSHOP

In the weekly workshop, which is conducted in a circle, students critically and constructively respond to a peer's piece of writing they have already read. The students use the following framework:

- **Summarise** – genre, action, readership, elements of craft (character, POV, setting, time)
- **What worked and why?** – specific examples
- **What didn't work and why?** – specific examples
- **Where to from here?** – what the writer can focus on

SCAFFOLDING

- The weekly workshop is preceded by a short lecture on **craft** (e.g., time, setting, character) with a view to giving students terms and concepts to better analyse expressive writing.
- A **writing prompt** follows, giving students 15–20 minutes to write spontaneously and expressively, practising the technique or term in focus.

THE WORKSHOP IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

The learning space is:

- discursal and interactive
- **communicative and collaborative** – diverging from the FLT convention that positions writing as solitary
- **emotional**. Of note is the dominance of difficult themes, given the age of students and the nature of expressive writing – the teacher's role in mediation is vital.

Students are routinely:

- moving between productive and receptive skills.
- employing close reading skills.
- actively listening.
- receiving comprehensible input from the other students' writing and oral contributions.

Students are becoming aware of:

- writing as a process.
- Lexicology.
- the link between reading and writing in language learning.
- applied grammar in practice.

IN A TEACHING DEGREE

All of those skills are valuable for language learners and teachers alike, but added benefits for future teachers are:

- the workshop environment exposes them to a form of pedagogy they could potentially utilise.
- it shows them how the different skills in language learning can be **simultaneously** deployed.
- the emotional nature of workshopping original writing can be beneficial in improving empathy and feedback-giving skills, vital for teachers.

THE RESULTS THUS FAR

- The class is now in its 5th run.
- The class is being incorporated into the degree program as an elective class.
- Students are producing the first issue of a literary journal.

REFERENCES

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