Using qualitative methods as a needs analysis for developing a creative writing course: a thematic analysis

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Abstract

Designing a creative writing (CW) course involves a lengthy, non-linear and multifaceted process. Needs analysis can be used as a starting point for data collection to explore the needs of the course from the perspective of the involved key players and the related areas.

This present study is the first round of needs analysis which is part of a larger PhD project. It uses qualitative methods of data collection, namely, non-participant unstructured observations and semi-structured interviews as the first round of data collection at the University of Birmingham (UoB). Thematic analysis has been used to interpret the data and categorise the recurring themes inductively, which will later be compared to the Subject Benchmark of Creative Writing in the UK. The results of this study will be used in the second round of data collection for needs analysis at Salahaddin University-Erbil (SUE) in the larger project that aims to design a CW course at English departments at SUE in the Kurdistan of Iraq (KRI).

Keywords: Creative writing, course design, needs analysis, qualitative research, thematic analysis.

1. Introduction

Very early in the history of the discipline, Van Allen (1948), in a rather broad sense, defines CW as any form of writing which is characterized by the expression of thoughts, emotions and inner feelings which are unique only to the writer. After more than seven decades, the definition is still valid. Hitherto CW is an evolving and broad subject, which is supported by "a growing body of research and pedagogical thinking", and flexible with "the changing world of print publication and other media" (QAA, 2016, p. 4). Now creative writing is mainly categorized, especially at universities, into poetry, prose fiction (Light, 2002) as well as creative non-fiction and scriptwriting (Light, 2002; QAA, 2019).

Creative writing developed in most of the English-speaking countries. According to Myers (1996), the first creative writing course at higher education in the USA appeared around 1940 at the University of Iowa. In 1970s, it was recognised as an independent academic subject at higher education in the UK (QAA, 2019). Holeywell (2009) asserts that the history of creative writing in the higher education is much older than what is accounted for by the scholars. O'Rourke (2005, p.9) argues that the flexibility of values in American education to the cultural changes is the reason why creative writing first appeared in the USA. Likewise, it appeared in the UK at the time when 'cultural policy' underwent changes, especially with regard to improvements in 'literature policy'.

In Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), CW is an emerging subject at higher education. It has only recently been offered as an independent course within English departments alongside literature and linguistics modules/subjects at Salahaddin University-Erbil (SUE), Soran University and American University of Sulaimany. The researchers of this present study are among the first researchers to have taught CW as an elective module within English

departments at SUE as part of a PhD project aiming to introduce CW into the curricula of SUE.

However, the context in which CW is taught in KRI is unique. First, it is taught in English departments which have objectives of developing language and literary skills as opposed to pure CW objectives of developing aspiring writers. Also, the students who have joined the CW course have different language competencies and are mostly below the expected level. What is more, the culture and the context in which it is taught is different from teaching CW in the English-speaking countries where English is the native language.

Similar to other countries, universities in KRI, regarded as formalized institutions, could have been reluctant to embrace creative writing since its nature raises questions about its eligibility to be taught at universities. Also, since it is a new field in KRI, there are not many experts of CW to attempt to establish it as an independent subject, realising such a project would entail an increasing staff, along with administrative and fiscal support.

Therefore, this study is a preliminary phase, within a larger doctorate project, of a needs analysis process to find out the needs of introducing a CW course at SUE English departments in KRI. It adopts a qualitative methodology to explore various issues and aspects that later could be used as a basis for more developed and experimental phases of the larger project, which is outside the scope of this present study. The qualitative methodology comprises class observations and interviews as open-ended means.

2. Literature Review

According to Mackey and Gass (2005, p.162), qualitative research can "refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures." It mainly depends on "none-numerical data" using non-statistical techniques to gather data such as observations, interviews, diaries, case studies and the like (Brown and Rodgers, 2002, p. 12). Mack and Gass (2005, p.162-163) also provide specific characteristics of qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research. First, qualitative research provides "rich description" instead of statistics of quantitative data. It is "natural and holistic" because it attempts to study the target population or process in the natural context without an attempt to influence the determinants and dynamics of the environment, and it demonstrates a holistic depiction of the socio-cultural environment and experience on macro as well as micro-level. Also, qualitative research usually collects extensive data from a small number of participants, regardless of the question of 'generalizability'.

Other characteristics include using "emic perspectives" to categorise the experience of the target population, which involves presenting phenomena from the perspectives that are meaningful to the participants. Moreover, qualitative research is inductive and open-ended; in other words, it does not try to examine certain pre-set hypotheses but the aim is to find out categories observed during research and then narrow down the scope in a cyclical manner. The research questions are also open-ended and the hypotheses could result from qualitative research instead of being pre-conceived prior to research. Finally, qualitative research can have partiality, i.e. taking "ideological orientations" with specific social, cultural, educational, or political aims (Mack and Gass, 2005, p.163-164).

Among the two non-numerical but effective qualitative data collection methods are observations and interviews. Observation is a valuable data collection method for educators and academics across the study fields. It can provide rich source of data about the learners and the context in a straightforward and rigorous manner; the data is reliable and convenient to support enhancing educational reforms and developments (Zieman, 2012; Huhta et al, 2013). Allwright (1988, p. xvi) defines observation as "a procedure for keeping a record of classroom events in such a way that it can later be studied, either for teacher training or research purposes."

Observation has to be systematic following a certain observation routine, using specific recording tools, taking a stance, and "checking, specifying and seeking explanation" (Gillham, 2008, p. 6) in order to establish the trustworthiness of the procedure.

Ciesielska et al (2018, p. 34) categorise three main types of observation in social sciences: *direct participant*, *direct non-participant* and *indirect observation*. All the observation types seem to have advantages with regard to the situation in which they are conducted. Long (2005, p. 42) finds the direct types to be of benefit in enhancing exhaustive research pertinent to learners' experience and practice in their natural learning environment. On the other hand, indirect observation occurs when the researcher has no direct access to the context, instead they use alternative methods such as video and audio recordings, and documents.

Researchers can have a pre-determined plan, as to what they want to observe; in other words, they are looking for predefined categories derived from literature review and theory; this is called *structured observation. Unstructured observation*, conversely, does not restrict itself to observing the classroom following preconceived notions. Mulhall (2003) finds "It is based within the [interpretive]/[constructivist] paradigm that acknowledges the importance of context and the coconstruction of knowledge between researcher and 'researched'." (See Long, 2005, p.31 inductive vs deductive procedures).

In the preliminary stages of research, the researcher needs to choose a certain observation method and stance, since this will have ensuing implications for adopting data gathering procedures and observation instruments (Zieman, 2012, p. 53). Ciesielska et al (2018, p. 34) remark that adopting any observation method depends on the "initial research problem" and "the scientific context" of the field. It can also depend on if it is the main method or part of triangulation or multiple sources method.

Adopting multiple-method research, observation can work as a precursor, as an open-ended method, to help form or revisit research questions and establish needs for further methods. Observation is "exploratory" and "adaptive", therefore, most commonly adopted in the early phases of research through which researchers can arrive at certain research specifications. Since observation can explore the new 'unfamiliar' context of the study, it can result in adaptation of research methods and questions, possibly differing relatively from what was initially envisaged (Gillham, 2008, p.6). To Ciesielska et al (2018, p. 34-35) using a direct non-participant observation "a researcher might discover that some aspects of a certain subculture… can only be fully understood by an active involvement in their reality, experiencing first-hand their daily lives and sharing their joys, concerns, and successes." This is parallel with Long's (2005) procedure to carry out needs analysis using multiple sources starting with an open-ended method to provide a better understanding of the research questions and determine aims; then followed by closed-ended methods to arrive at certain conclusions.

Therefore, using observation in tandem with other methods can help to achieve a balanced 'objective' and 'subjective' view. Besides, using multiple methods in qualitative research can combine the strength and keep the disadvantages of each method to the minimum. Best and Kahn (2006, p.269) believe that using observation and interview also "[permit] the researcher to verify interview information with observed events and to understand what is observed through interview responses."

Thus, interviews can be used with observation to obtain a balanced view. Although using interviews (and questionnaires) can yield a resourceful data about teachers and students, they remain limited if used alone because they only demonstrate what participants purport to be true about themselves without having an outsider view about their practices (Gillham, 2008).

Interviews are one of the main data-collection methods in the field of applied linguistics and can be used in needs analysis (Long, 2005). If used as a complementary method to observation, interviews can increase validity and reliability of the collected data, and provide an in-depth analysis of participant-oriented perspectives on the teaching and learning

experience (Mackey and Gass, 2005). To Richards (2001, p.61), "An interview can be used at the preliminary stage of designing a questionnaire, since it will help the designer get a sense of what topics and issues can be focused on in the questionnaire."

Interviews are categorised in terms of design into structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Unstructured interviews do not depend on a list of pre-determined questions but are open-ended like a discussion. While it allows for detailed exploration of issues and opinions unpredicted, they can be time-consuming and difficult to interpret. On the other hand, structured interviews are a list of prepared questions which have the advantage of answering all the issues raised, explaining ambiguous items, and examine other areas that were not explored by other methods (like observation or questionnaire). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepares a list of questions but is prepared to divert and explore other avenues. It can have advantages of both unstructured and structured interviews (Long, 2005; Mackey and Gass, 2005).

However, interviews are not free from issues; one issue is that the interviewers can influence the answers in different ways and misinterpret the data. Therefore, these issues need to be avoided; one way is through training the interviewer. Among several ways to decrease bias including designing and delivering interviews, the researchers can learn through the training to consult external assessor, such as applied linguists and domain experts; they can provide valuable feedback prior to conducting the interview (Long, 2005).

Both interviews and observations can be carried out qualitatively and their analysis differs from that of quantitative data. More on qualitative research and methods of data analysis will be elaborated in the following sections.

3. Methodology

The procedure of this qualitative study, as the first round of needs analysis, involved combing observation with student and teacher interviews during the researchers' visit to the University of Birmingham (UoB) in the UK, used as two key methods following the review of literature and formulation of aims (see figure 1).
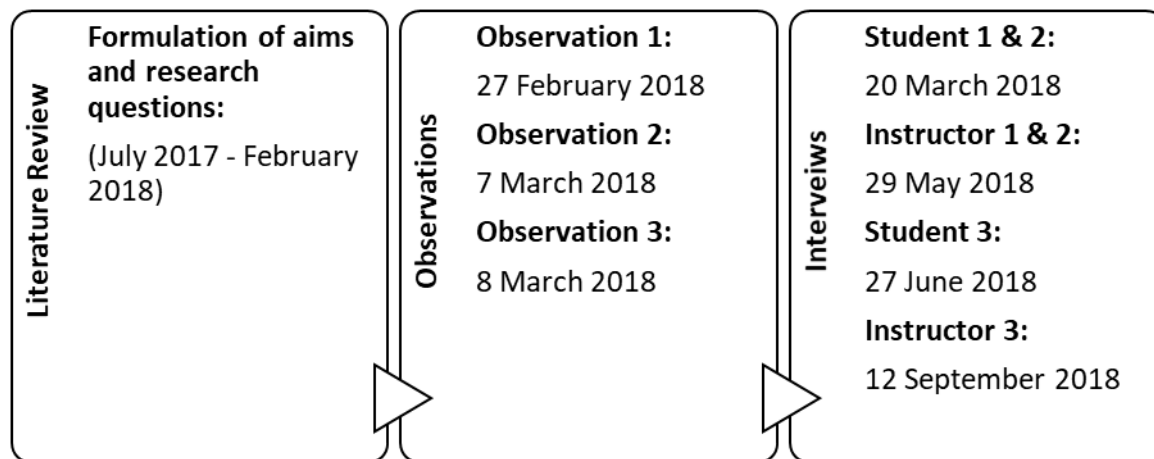

Figure 1: Timeline of data collection for the qualitative research

Class observation was used as an initial step to gain a conceptual understanding of creative writing classes, teaching, and materials. Three observations were made on 27 February, 7 March and 8 March 2018 in the Film and Creative Writing Department at UoB according to the availability of the classes and permission granted by the university. The first and the second observations were made into the postgraduate *Creative Writing Skills II* module within MA Creative Writing, and the third observation was made in the undergraduate *Hatred of Poetry* module within BA English and Creative Writing.

Following the observation shortly, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with three creative writing instructors and three international students who voluntarily agreed to participate (using a convenience sample) in the interviews after an email was circulated in the Film and Creative Writing Department. Ethical issues prior to and following the interviews and observations were taken into consideration. The participants' permission was taken; confidentiality was observed also: the students and instructors are not referred to by their real names but *student 1, 2, 3* and *instructor 1, 2, 3*.

Unstructured, non-participant observation with a *passive observer* stance was adopted, and notetaking was used a tool to record the data and to keep the audit trail. It was followed by *semi-structured* interviews. Initially, 14 questions were prepared for the interviews, but 3 more questions were asked in the teacher interviews and 2 more questions in the students' interviews. The interviews were recorded, and later transcribed by the researchers.

The observation was *unstructured* which is in line with Long's (2005) and Mackey & Susan's (2005) inductive procedure to categorise the needs qualitatively as a first step. *Semi-structured* interviews were chosen, since in a cyclical data analysis procedure it is more effective to choose a more focused data collection method to form the research categories, hypothesis or explore the needs (Long, 2005; Mackey and Gass, 2005).

The data collected from the observations and interviews were coded for thematic analysis. NVivo 11 and 12 (software for qualitative data analysis) were used to categorise the themes and sub-themes, which were repeated patterns in the classes and interviews. Thematic analysis proves useful data analysis method for this study since there is a considerable amount of qualitative data to analyse (Nowell, 2017).

In order to observe the internal validity of the research, *triangulation by methods* (interview and observation) and *sources* (teachers and students) have been employed which is "a procedure long used by researchers, e.g., ethnographers, working within a qualitative, or naturalistic, tradition to help validate their data and thereby, eventually, to increase the credibility of their interpretations of those data" (Long, 2005, p.28). In triangulation process, the researchers compare various sources and sets of data. Using triangulation can render the research credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable (Macky and Gass, 2005).

Moreover, the results from all the three sources will be compared to Creative Writing Subject Benchmark Statement documents (2016 and 2019) which are written by 19 UK university members along with two Quality Assurance Agency for UK Higher Education (QAA) officers, an employer representative and a student reader. This benchmark was put together as a requirement and in line with UK Quality Code for Higher Education and QAA for the expectations of the UK creative writing courses. Benchmark statements can prove useful reference points for academic achievement in developing, teaching, and evaluating courses. However, they are not meant to "represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community" (QAA, 2016, p. 2).

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In the three class observations, 4 main themes and 12 sub-themes were identified: (1) **CW Aspects** (Genres, CW, Culture and Society, and Miscellaneous); (2) **CW Teaching** (Starting Class, Student Preparation, Further Reading, Teacher Feedback, Peer Feedback and Miscellaneous); (3) **Class** (Class Shape, Class Size, and Demography); (4) **Language** (see table 1)

Table 1: Themes identified in the observations and the number of references

Theme/ Sub-themes	Observation 1		Observation 2		Observation 3		Total
	References	Coverage percentage	References	Coverage percentage	References	Coverage percentage	References
CW aspects	**24**	**32.18%**	**25**	**53.00%**	**17**	**11.69%**	**66**
Genres	6	3.54%	4	5.96%	3	1.64%	13
CW, culture & society	2	3.67%	6	16.83%	1	3.36%	9
Miscellaneous							
	16	26.32%	15	30.90%	13	6.69	44
Teaching CW	**12**	**35.60%**	**9**	**16.92%**	**17**	**42.06%**	**38**
Starting Class	2	6.87%	1	5.65%	0	0	3
Student preparation	3	6.50%	1	0.91	1	0.53%	5
Further reading	2	4.81%	0	0%	4	2.55%	6
Teacher feedback	2	4.60%	1	0.82%	2	1.26%	5
Peer feedback	1	3.33%	1	0.82%	2	1.77%	4
Miscellaneous	2	9.49%	5	14.46%	8	37.46%	15
Class	**3**	**9.66%**	**3**	**5.14%**	**3**	**3.26%**	**9**
Class shape	1	2.15%	1	0.43%	1	0.20%	3
Class size	1	1.27%	1	1.51%	1	1.89%	3
Demography	1	6.24%	1	3.19%	1	1.16%	3
Language	**3**	**12.23%**	**3**	**3.93%**	**0**	**0**	**6**
	42		**40**		**37**		**119**

In the teacher interviews, 18 themes were first identified, categorized into 9 main themes and 9 sub-themes: (1) **Teaching CW** (Teaching methods, Inspiration, Teaching perspective, Content), (2) **Assessment**, (3) **Skills** (CW & Language, CW & other skills, CW & Literature), (4) **Needs** (5) **Reasons to teach** (6) **Genres to teach** (7) **Issues** (Challenges, and Solutions), (8) **Employability**, (9) **CW BA vs MA & PhD** (see figure 2 and table 2).
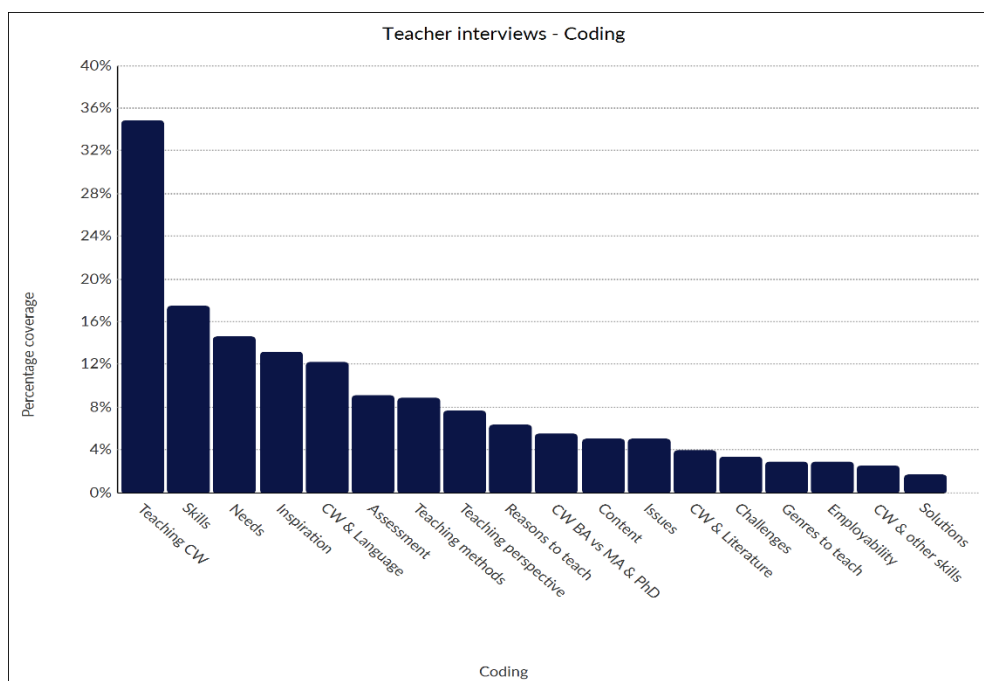

Figure 2: Teacher interview thematic analysis coding

As for the student interviews, 16 themes were categorised into 7 main themes and 9 sub-themes: (1) **Personal (**Inspiration; Reasons to study) (2) **Teaching CW**, (3) **Genres** (Genres I

Read, Genres I Write, and Genres to Teach), (4) **Skills** (CW & language, and CW & other skills), (5) **Needs**, (6) **Issues** (Challenges, and Solutions), and (7) **Employment** (see figure 3 and table 3).
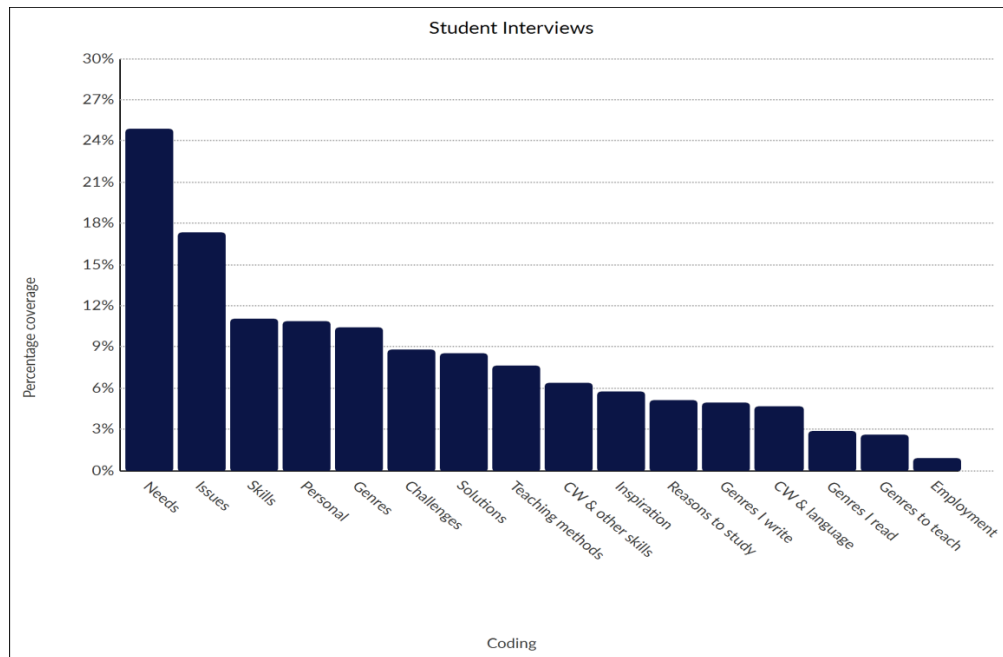

Figure 3: Student interview thematic analysis coding

After triangulation of the results from all the three sources (the observations, student and teacher interviews), a number of recurring themes and sub-themes can be noticed. These themes were later checked against Creative Writing Subject Benchmark Statement documents (2016 and 2019).

Among the themes that repeat in the three sources are **teaching CW**, **genres**, and **language** and the themes that only repeat in the two interview sources are **issues**, **skills**, **needs**, **employability** and **personal reasons** to teach or study CW. The categorisation could be different in each source depending on their relevance to the source and proximity to the main themes under which they are categorised.

Table 2: Teacher interview thematic analysis references and percentage

Themes/ sub-themes	References	Percentage coverage
Teaching CW	41	34.89%
Teaching methods	14	8.88%
Inspiration	13	13.20%
Teaching perspective	8	7.72%
Content	6	5.09%
Assessment	21	9.13%
Skills	18	17.43%
CW & Language	8	12.16%
CW & other skills	6	9.13%
CW & Literature	4	3.92%
Needs	10	14.60%
Reasons to teach	9	6.39%
Genres to teach	9	2.88%
Issues	9	5.06%
Challenges	5	3.33%

Solutions	4	1.73%
Employability	7	2.82%
CW BA vs MA & PhD	3	5.46%

According to CW benchmark in the UK, teaching CW reflects the nature of the subject. Since it is practical, learners have to assume an active role in their learning and teaching should ensure a hands-on and creative experience in writing. Therefore, the discipline employs the teaching methods which entail collaboration including workshops, lectures, seminars, tutorials, project work, group/pair work, editing and annotation, technical skills, master classes, mentoring, fieldwork, and inviting guest speakers (QAA, 2019, p. 10-12).

Teaching was one of the most common themes in the observations and interviews. What the instructors and students expressed was reflected in the classes. It was found that the students and teachers mostly agree with the lecture-format to teach CW, especially on undergraduate level, using engaging methods to teach various aspects. *Observation 3* (O3) was a lecture format and this is where most of the teaching occurred among all the observations made. Although they found workshops of benefit, especially for teacher and peer feedback, students found it challenging to comment on their peers' works. They also felt they needed more teaching of basic skills and techniques in CW rather than only read and comment on work. This could be conducted but with limits. *Instructor 3* thinks workshops can be most effective if students brought in their weak work or work in-progress to receive upfront feedback (see table 1).

Table 3: Student interview thematic analysis references and percentage

Themes	References	Percentage (coverage)
Personal	**9**	**10.88%**
Inspiration	3	5.74%
Reasons to study	6	5.14%
Teaching CW	**7**	**7.62%**
Genres	**20**	**10.38%**
Genres I Read	12	2.83%
Genres I Write	6	4.91%
Genres to Teach	2	2.64%
Skills	**9**	**11.03%**
CW & Language	3	4.65%
CW & Other Skills	6	6.38%
Needs	**12**	**24.91%**
Issues	**15**	**17.32%**
Challenges	10	8.80%
Solutions	5	8.52%
Employment	**3**	**0.90%**

Besides, to the students and instructors, other effective teaching techniques and methods in CW classes include group work, peer feedback, discussion, generative exercises, prompts, intertextual writing, and seminars. Other methods noticed on UoB campus by the visiting researchers were talks, readings or book signings by renowned writers as part of Creative Minds at Birmingham activity as well as providing frequent tutorials, and inviting guest lecturers to the classes. Such activities and more are also suggested by the CW benchmark for professional development purposes (QAA, 2016, 2019).

Among the aspects that were taught frequently in the CW classes were plot, characters and characterisation, setting, points of view and narrative, dialogue, literary devices, description, pace and arrangement including opening and ending, voice, style, and writing conventions.

CW writing is also related to other skills, according to the students and teachers. It can enhance presentation, communication, and self-discipline skills. Also, creative writers are better observers, critical, expressive, convincing and empathetic. Therefore, the CW benchmark categorises the skills into subject knowledge (CW aspects), CW specific skills which are mostly transferable, along with graduate and generic skills.

The second largest number of references (21) was made to the assessment of CW students. On the whole, the instructors agreed on the progress, mid-term and final assessment. *Instructor 1*, argues that assessing progress can be challenging, since the students can make progress with some aspects and retrogress with others. However, that is the case with any complex process, since you have to be quite adept at multiple aspects at the same time.

Mid-term assessment, according to *instructor 2*, prepares the students for the final assessment as to what expect by the end of the course; the final assessment, on the other hand, is a coursework (a portfolio) requiring a creative piece accompanied by a critical essay, a commentary on one's work to contextualise it.

As for the methods of assessment, the instructors propose the following as the most conducive ones: workshops, presentations, participation and collaboration (student feedback i.e.), teacher feedback, and portfolio (coursework). The instructors unanimously agree that exams would be inappropriate as an assessment tool for CW. *Instructor 3* particularly has strong views on this:

> I don't think this is appropriate in the discipline. I think just because everyone writes in different ways. Some people can come up with something off the cuff, some great improvisers. Some people would have a kind of panic attack.

Nonetheless, *Instructor 1* and *instructor 2* expressed their curiosity to see what will happen if exams are used in CW assessment. *Instructor 1* thinks that, exams are dismissed almost immediately; however, they could have usage in certain cultures, especially to make sure students have learned specific techniques and aspects.

There are a large number of criteria that the instructors suggest on which to base their assessment. *Instructor 1* suggests the following: technicality, control, language precision, professionalism, thought and idea, creativity and novelty, narrative and pace, characterisation, and (in poetry) rhythm, rhyme, shape.

Selection of which aspects to teach and which skills to include are dependent on the goals of the course in terms of skills, which is closely related to the assessment scheme. A number of researchers-based teaching and assessing CW on showing creativity attributes in writing which include characterisation, image, voice and story (Mozaffari, 2013; Tung, 2015; Mills 2006; and Burroway, 2011). In addition, Subject Benchmark Statement for Creative Writing in the UK suggests assessment criteria be based on aspects including use of language, originality, ambition, technical mastery, imagination, maturity of style, research, audience engagement, response to brief, awareness of context and genre and presentation (QAA, 2019, p. 14). Rubrics at UoB to assess CW work reflected the mentioned criteria which were mastery of techniques and conventions, evidence of invention, awareness of contemporary context individuality and empathy, achievement of a crafted or shaped piece of writing, and approaching a publishable standard.

According to research conducted for CW students at SUE in KRI, particularly to find out about assessment criteria, the criteria reached differed slightly from the ones used in the UK universities. The criteria were adopted considering the local context in which CW was taught as part of English language and literature programme, considering that students' L1 was not English. The study found that the best criteria should include: Use of English Language and Language Devices, Image and Characterisation, Structure, Awareness of Context, genre, and Audience, and Voice (Rasool and Al Bajalani, 2020).

Additionally, in order to inspire and engage students in teaching CW, teachers expressed they should assign texts and writers that are intriguing, fresh and challenging. Real experiences such as meeting writers, reading and publishing their work can motivate students. On the other hand, students have been inspired by personal reasons to pursue CW. They use CW to express their emotions and feelings for reflection and resolution.

Discussion and teaching of the genres repeated throughout the observations and interviews. As it was noted, in the lecture-format class shorter genres were being exercised such as poetry, prose-poetry or texts which did not conform to a specific genre. In the workshops, short stories were discussed more frequently followed by drama. When asked, both teachers and students found shorter genres more suitable to teach, especially on undergraduate level. Besides, students tended to write shorter genres, especially poetry and short story more.

With regard to the connection between CW and language, students think CW can help improve their English language. The instructors, similarly, think CW can improve linguistic ability; for example, students can experiment with different vocabulary. Besides, with CW, personal meaning is attached to the language the students use, and the student become more expressive and critical. As for language issues, in the observations, comments were provided by teachers and students on the advanced issues register, lexicology, economic use and depth of language. However, international students mentioned that they had other linguistic issues which they thought would impede their engagement with the class and their expression in writing. Therefore, students whose mother tongue is not English should be taken into consideration.

The students had other issues than linguistic issues. The benchmark suggests that workshop group sizes should be as small as consisting of 10-15 students so that the students writing is duly given attention. Also, the classes should be divided into smaller groups to encourage student-centred teaching and allowing more student autonomy (QAA, 2016, 2019). However, the teachers thought that the classes are big and they do not easily allow for student participation and receiving feedback as such. In addition, students cannot participate in the workshop discussions if they are not trained. Students can also be frustrated when they come across cultural differences as a whole. They might find it difficult to work alone and that in turn could affect their passion for writing.

Therefore, the teachers and students suggest that the students need to be prepared linguistically to participate; the classes should be smaller. Cultural differences could be solved through dialogue and representation of writers and texts across different genres, genders, ages and cultures. Moreover, students need to read extensively and develop habit of writing. With regard to the classes in the observations, the most covered sub-theme was the demography of the class among other sub-themes as class shape and size. The postgraduate workshops had more international non-native students compared to the undergraduate class. However, all the classes comprised a small number of students not exceeding 14 students arranged in a U-shaped form; a large majority were female students, 28 out of 36 students. When asked about putting CW materials together, *Instructor 2* expressed that the selected material should consider "the representation across the board. There is some sense of equality you get from a reading list" which is done by having a range of authors, different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and sexualities. The Quality Code in the UK integrates the values of diversity and equality into higher education (QAA, 2016, p.3). This was reflected in the materials used in the classes. Hence the number of female students, for example, it was observed that during O3, the instructor used materials from a contemporary female writer through a handout of week 9 titled *Emily Berry, Stranger.*

When asked about the employability after graduation, the instructors mentioned a considerable number of skills that a CW programme can enhance to be of benefit after graduation. Other than being a good training ground for linguistic ability, creative writing also hones editorial skills and teaches students to shape narratives—and narratives are increasingly

being recognised as foundational to human beings' understanding of the world, and hence prized by all public-facing employers, i.e., all employers who need to communicate something to a wider public in a manner that is meaningful to this public.

Instructor 2, however, showed her concern regarding if CW would give students more chances or not. She recalls her parents' concern. She adds, "When I was a student there was an idea that CW was a kind of fuzzy and less substance to it." Nonetheless, she thinks that is changing. Now more awareness, creative subjects are more beneficial. Some students take it very seriously who start up writing societies and publish magazines. Thus, CW graduates can have a demanding set of skills in the job market. These skills are transferable and valuable to the society.

Creative writing traditionally finds itself integrated into the schools and colleges of languages, particularly English language. However, due to its independent and flexible nature, it is studied alongside other fields such as literary studies, arts, humanities, and other areas. The undergraduate CW programmes can be either single or double honours combined with another subject. The postgraduate degrees are usually offered independently (QAA, 2016, 2019). In the interviews and observations, among the least referenced themes was the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. On undergraduate level, CW is studied alongside English, in contrast to postgraduate degrees which solely focus on CW. The objectives and requirements of teaching CW on both levels are different.

Hence CW teaching approach and perspective reflect the nature of the discipline, the instructors do not define their teaching approaches in specific terms. According to the benchmark, "Writing programmes in the UK tend to be eclectic in their creative output rather than prescriptive of particular schools of writing or dominant house-styles" (QAA, 2019, p. 4). This is best expressed by *instructor 3*, "It's a shame we don't have different schools of thought in creative writing like we do in drama…Nobody is upfront about their approach. They certainly are different."

Instructor 1 is against the formalist approach of teaching CW; He believes one can teach ideas behind certain forms or rules like 'show don't tell' or 'avoid cliches' but should foster the "questioning attitude" in the students. The students, therefore, can have their own assumption as to what a good writing involves and they can experiment with it. It reads in the benchmark, "Students have the responsibility for their own work, from conception through development, editing, final redrafting." However, there are certain scopes, forms, or orientations defined by the programme providers or writing and publishing industry (QAA, 2019, p. 4)

Instructor 2 approaches teaching creative writing from a more "empathetic" perspective or what she calls 'Sympathetic Texts' which makes writers more sensitive to issues such as environment and other cultures. That would also entail self-expression shaped into an artistic form. *Instructor 3* prefers a hybrid approach; to him, this involves experimenting with genre-fluid writing which are short and flexible and can result in immediate reactions from students. He also encourages giving students certain models to follow and try to achieve writing in that form; this differs relatively from the first instructor's view but is not necessarily contradictory.

5. Conclusions

Qualitative research can be adopted as part of needs analysis as a preliminary step to narrow down the scope, goals, and hypotheses of research in curriculum design. This present study has used observations and interviews as open-ended means to find out about the repeated patterns.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data from three different sources which are observations, student interviews and teacher interviews. Four main themes and twelve sub-themes were found in the observations. In the teacher interviews, 18 themes were first

organised, categorized into 9 main themes and 9 sub-themes. As for the student interviews, 16 themes were categorised into 7 main themes and 9 sub-themes. Teaching CW, genres, and language were among the themes that were repeated in the three sources and the themes that only repeated in the two interview sources were issues, skills, needs, employability and personal reasons to teach or study CW.

Triangulation of the sources with Subject Benchmark Statement of Creative Writing was used to increase dependability, credibility, trustworthiness and in turn the validity and reliability of the data. The common themes and sub-themes can be used as raw material to design close-ended methods in further research trying to find out about the needs for designing a CW course.

Since this study has been conducted inductively, the results of this first round of needs analysis can be used to formulate the scope, aims, and hypotheses for designing a CW course at English departments at SUE in KRI. Drawing on the results of the first round, more close-ended research methods can be used in the second round.

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استخدام طرق البحث النوعي لتحليل احتياجات تطوير منهج الكتابة الإبداعية: تحليل موضوعي

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الملخص

يتضمن تصميم منهج للكتابة الإبداعية عملية طويلة وغير خطية ومتعددة الأوجه. يمكن استخدام تحليل الاحتياجات كنقطة انطلاق لجمع البيانات لاستكشاف احتياجات المنهج من منظور أصحاب المصلحة المعنيين والمجالات ذات الصلة.

هذه الدراسة الحالية هي مرحلة أولية لتحليل الاحتياجات وهي جزء من مشروع دكتوراه لتصميم منهج الكتابة الإبداعية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة صلاح الدين - أربيل في كردستان العراق. تستخدم هذه الدراسة الأساليب النوعية لجمع البيانات ، بما في ذلك الملاحظات و المشاهدات الصفية غير المنظمة والمقابلات شبه المنظمة باعتبارها الجولة الأولى من جمع البيانات. تم استخدام التحليل الموضوعي لتفسير البيانات وتصنيف الموضوعات المتكررة ، والتي ستتم مقارنتها لاحقًا بمعيار الموضوع للكتابة الإبداعية في المملكة المتحدة. سيتم استخدام نتائج هذه الدراسة في الجولة الثانية من جمع البيانات في مشروع الدكتوراه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الإبداعية ، تصميم المناهج ، تحليل الاحتياجات ، البحث النوعي ، التحليل الموضوعي

بەکارهێنانی میتۆدە جۆرییەکان وەک بەشێك لە شیکاری پێویستییەکان بۆ پەرەپێدانی کۆرسێکی نوسینی داهێنانکارانە: شیکاریەکی بابەتیانە

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پوختە

دیزانکردنی کۆرسێکی نوسینی داهێنانکارانە پرۆسەیەکی دوورودرێژ و پێچاوپێچ و فرەڕەهەندە. دەکرێ شیکاری پێداویستییەکان وەک خاڵ دەستپێك بەکاربهێنرێ بۆ کۆکردنەوەی داتا بۆ لێکۆڵینەوە لە پێداویستییەکانی کۆرسەکە لە گۆشەنیگای لایەنە سەرەکی و بوارە پەیوەندیدارەکانەوە.

ئەم لێکۆڵینەوەیەی بەردەست بریتییە لە قۆناغی سەرەتای شیکاری پێویستییەکان بۆ دیزانکردنی کۆرسێکی نوسینی داهێنانکارانە لە بەشەکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی لە زانکۆی سەلاحەددین، کە بەشێکە لە پرۆژەیەکی دکتۆرا. لێکۆڵینەوەکە هەڵدەستێ بە بەکارهێنانی میتۆدە جۆرییەکانی کۆکردنەوەی داتا لە نێوانیاندا چاودێری (جۆری بەشداری ناکارا، بێ بوونی پەیکەربەند) لەگەڵ چاوپێکەوتن وەک یەکەم خولی کۆکردنەوەی داتا. شیکاری بابەتیانە بۆ داتای کۆکراوە و پۆلێنکردنی بابەتەکان دەکری، کە دواتر لەگەڵ پێوەرەکانی بابەتی نوسینی داهێنانکارانە لە بەریتانیا بەراورد دەکرێن. ئەنجامەکانی ئەم لێکۆڵینەوەیە لە قۆناغی دووەمی داتا کۆکردنەوە لە پرۆژەی دکتۆراکە بەکاردەهێندرێن.

وشە کلیلیەکان: نوسینی داهێنانکارانە، دیزانکردنی کۆرس، شیکاری پێویستییەکان، توێژینەوەی جۆری، شیکاری بابەتیانە