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Department of English Language and Literature

**Using Creative Writing as a Tool for
Teaching English as a Foreign
Language**

Diploma Thesis

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Supervisor

doc. Mgr. Světlana Hanušová, Ph.D.

Author

Mgr. Michaela Pelcová

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Annotation

The aim of this thesis is to describe the issue of creative writing and explain its possible contribution as a tool for teaching and learning English and to find out through a questionnaire survey among teachers of English, what their attitude is towards using creative writing exercises in their lessons, whether they see creative writing as a tool with positive effect on developing their students' language skills and how frequently they actually use it in their teaching practice.

The thesis is divided into two parts—theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part the attention is paid to three main areas—language skills, creativity and motivation, advantages of using creative writing in teaching English and creative writing in English classrooms. Characteristics of using creative writing in teaching English, approaches to creative writing, its benefits as well as obstacles are also described.

In the practical part the actual research based on a questionnaire survey is provided. The survey was performed among English language teachers in the Czech Republic by means of an online survey. The aim of the research is followed by the description of participants, methodology, questions used in the questionnaire and the actual analysis. At the very end of the thesis there are appendices with interesting electronic tools, examples of creative writing and the actual form that was used in the questionnaire survey.

Key Words

Creative writing, motivation, creativity, writing, language skills, EFL, foreign language teaching, teaching writing skills, teachers of English

Anotace

Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl prozkoumat možnost využití tvůrčího psaní a popsat jeho potenciál při výuce anglického jazyka a v této souvislosti také zmapovat pohled učitelů anglického jazyka na využití tvůrčího psaní při výuce jazyka. Práce se skládá z teoretické a praktické části.

Teoretická část se skládá z kapitol popisujících psaní jako dovednost, tvůrčí psaní a jeho význam z hlediska motivace žáků a rozvoje jejich kreativity. Dále se zaměřuje na výhody používání prvků tvůrčího psaní ve výuce anglického jazyka, stejně tak jako praktické aspekty jako jsou role učitele při využívání tvůrčího psaní, atmosféra ve třídě či různé překážky.

Praktická část poté mapuje prostřednictvím dotazníku praktické využití tvůrčího psaní v hodinách anglického jazyka mezi učiteli. Zabývá se otázkou, zda v současné době učitelé anglického jazyka podporují myšlenku vyučovat anglický jazyk i prostřednictvím tvůrčího psaní. V této části práce jsou popsáni jak účastníci výzkumu, tak i metodologie, otázky použité v dotazníku a vlastní analýza. V samotném závěru práce lze najít přílohy, kde uvádím různé elektronické zdroje, příklady tvůrčího psaní i samotný dotazník, který byl použit pro můj výzkum.

Klíčová slova

Tvůrčí psaní, kreativita, motivace, jazykové dovednosti, psaní, výuka cizího jazyka, výuka psaní

Declaration

I hereby declare that I worked on this thesis on my own and that all the sources I used are listed in the bibliography.

I agree that the thesis be placed in the library of the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University in Brno and made accessible for study purposes.

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně, s využitím pouze citovaných literárních pramenů, dalších informací a zdrojů v souladu s Disciplinárním řádem pro studenty Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity a se zákonem č. 121/2000 Sb., o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů.

Souhlasím, aby práce byla uložena na Masarykově univerzitě v Brně v knihovně Pedagogické fakulty a zpřístupněna ke studijním účelům.

V Brně dne 30. března 2015

.....
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Introduction

Being able to communicate effectively is in the contemporary world one of the most important qualities that a person should acquire no later than throughout his or her early school years. Teaching students to communicate is definitely not as easy as a layman would imagine. The variation among students is very high and each of them has a different approach, different way of understanding and absorbing information. To teach students and pupils to communicate successfully, a teacher should carefully choose activities enhancing students' imagination, creativity, enthusiasm as well as reading and writing skills. Critical thinking, creating powerful texts either as a means of communication with the surrounding world or as a means of one's artistic expression are skills that can and should be trained since the early stages of education. One of the ways leading to the ability of expressing oneself in a written form can be creative writing, which will be the centre of this diploma thesis.

In the Czech Republic, especially at the level of primary or lower secondary schools, teaching writing skills often does not have as much attention as it would deserve. As it was mentioned earlier, the writing skills are those enabling a person to express his or her ideas clearly and therefore successfully communicate. In the contemporary world, there is not only a huge demand for people speaking foreign languages, but also for people able to express themselves in a written form. Using social media such as *Facebook* or *Twitter* and communicating through the means of written language has become a common activity of millions of people all over the world. The need for teaching young pupils to be able to communicate through writing is therefore more and more important. What has been a centre of attention on a job markets in the last decade is the ability to speak English. This means that the ability to communicate and speak English are major criteria on the job market nowadays.

Applying creative writing in English classroom from the early stages offers a great opportunity for pupils and students to develop those well-appreciated writing skills as well as to enhance their imagination, creativity, enthusiasm as well as motivation and most importantly practise English. During the years when I attended primary and secondary schools, the impact was predominantly on reading and speaking skills as they are often seen as those students might use most often. However, I believe that all of the language skills go hand in hand together and all of them should be

practised as much as possible. To teach students writing skills, increase their motivation and stretch their imagination a large number of creative tasks can be used in order to keep students interested. Exploiting some aspects of creative writing can broaden students' as well as teachers' horizons, foster their artistic expression, entertain them as well as help students find their identity and teachers to create a motivating environment.

Since I began my teaching practice, I have been using as many creative tasks as possible, not only strictly to teach writing. Since that time, I have also been wondering whether other teachers of English tend to pay attention to using creative writing tasks in their lessons or not. In my thesis I am therefore going to explore the possibilities of creative writing in order to develop students' English language skills as well as to do a questionnaire survey to find out whether teachers of English in Czech schools use creative writing as a tool for teaching English as a foreign language, not only to motivate students but also help them achieve their goals.

The aim of this thesis is thus to (1) describe the issue of creative writing and explain its possible contribution as a tool for teaching and learning English and to find out through a questionnaire survey among teachers of English, (2) what their attitude is towards using creative writing exercises in their lessons, whether they see creative writing as a tool with positive effect on developing their students' language skills and (3) how frequently they actually use it in their teaching practice.

To be able to reach the goal I will divide the thesis into two parts—theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part I will pay attention to three main areas a) language skills, creativity and motivation, b) theoretical aspects of using creative writing in teaching English and c) practical aspects of using creative writing in English classrooms. Characteristics of using creative writing in teaching English, approaches to creative writing, its benefits as well as obstacles will also be described.

In the practical part I will then provide the actual research based on a questionnaire survey performed among English language teachers in Czech schools by means of an online survey in order to achieve diversity and as much data as possible. The aim of the research will also be described in detail, followed by the description of participants, methodology, questions used in the questionnaire. In the last chapter of the thesis, the findings of the analysis will be presented.

Theoretical Part

“It is better to create than to learn!

Creating is the essence of life.”

—Julius Caesar

The first of the two major parts of my thesis provides theoretical background to creative writing as well as its possible use as a tool in teaching English. Right at the beginning, the attention will be paid to providing characteristics of the four language skills which allow us to communicate with our surroundings as well as share and receive information. Subsequently, I will pay attention to creative writing as a form of writing, its definition, its impact on motivation of students as well as I will provide information on possible benefits resulting from its use as a tool in teaching and practising English. In the middle part, the attention will be paid to the areas of language where creative writing can be helpful and how it should be used in English classroom. I will also describe the benefits of using both prose and poetry in practising English through creative writing, how the tasks should be presented in the classroom, why it is important to establish a democratic atmosphere in the classroom and what possible obstacles might occur. Last but not least, the issue of evaluating students' creative texts will be discussed as well as the advantages of the development of ICT (Information and communications technology) and its benefits for creative writing as a tool in language teaching and learning.

1 Language Skills, Creative Writing, Motivation and Learners

1.1 Language Skills

*“Those who know nothing of foreign languages
know nothing of their own. ”*
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

It is widely accepted that we distinguish between four language skills – **listening, speaking, reading and writing**. I deliberately list them in this particular order, because it more or less illustrates the order in which we encounter them. As small children, we first listen to the language of our parents. Subsequently we learn how to speak. Once we enter elementary school, we learn how to read and finally, when we master all of the above mentioned skills, we learn how to write. These skills can be further divided into two categories: **productive** (speaking and writing) and **receptive** (listening and reading), depending on whether students do produce the language themselves or not (Harmer, 2007, p. 265). Even though every teacher may have a different opinion on the importance of each of the language skills, to successfully and effectively learn a foreign language, all of the skills should be seen as equal and worth the same attention. As Harmer points out, “it makes little sense to talk about skills in isolation [...] because when we are engaged in conversation, we are bound to listen as well as speak because otherwise we could not interact with the person we are speaking to” (Harmer, 2007, p. 265). For this reason, before I will pay much of my attention to creative writing in teaching English, I will briefly mention all of the four language skills and their importance in communication.

1.1.1 Receptive Skills – Listening, Reading

In the past decades, receptive skills were often called **passive** skills, because to scholars, students did not observably produce any linguistic output. Especially listening was predominantly seen as a pre-requisite to speaking. However, as Chastain (1988) explains, “[i]n more recent theoretical models in which the mind is viewed as an information processing system, listening is considered an active process. Listeners are

thought to be involved actively in the communication process because they use their background knowledge of the world and of language to recreate the speakers' message" (p. 193). The same he later applies also to reading. "It requires active mental processing for communication to occur," (Chastain, 1988, p. 216) he states.

Both of these types of skills can be further divided into **extensive** and **intensive**. The former is usually seen as more motivating, because it is often the learner himself who chooses the sources of materials (what to read and what to listen) depending on his or her interests. This type of reading and learning usually takes place at home in learners' free time and "helps students acquire vocabulary and grammar" (Harmer, 2007, p. 303). Intensive reading and listening, on the other hand, often takes place in classrooms with audio recordings played to students chosen by teacher. Fortunately, with more and more accessible authentic materials (such as movies in original languages, countless radio stations available on the Internet, audiobooks, podcasts, and music surrounding us almost all the time) teaching listening gradually becomes a crucial part of language lessons. It is very important for students to "learn to predict content, to sample crucial components of the message, to verify or reject their predictions, and thus to recreate the speaker's message" (Chastain, 1988, p. 198).

Reading, on the other hand, is seen as probably slightly easier for learners to develop (Chastain, 1988, p. 216). It is at the same time a very necessary skill for learners, because it allows them to use it for their further independent language learning, possibly also in their free time. Various blogs, fiction literature as well as news and magazines are available on the Internet for free which is a perfect source for extensive reading and developing skills.

1.1.2 Productive Skills – Speaking, Writing

The remaining two language skills are probably the most 'visible' ones, as speaking is usually used to assess the level of student's knowledge of the particular language. Speaking allows us to directly communicate with our surroundings, no matter whether **interactively** or **non-interactively**. Mastering the speaking skill is actually a truly demanding process because as Harmer points out, "if students want to speak fluently in English, they need to be able pronounce phonemes correctly, use appropriate

stress and intonation patterns and speak in connected speech [as well as] speak in a range of different genres and situations [...]” (Harmer, 2007, p. 343).

Despite writing might seem a lot easier to master (in comparison with speaking), it is actually more demanding. At first, it might sound as a simple noting down of what has been spoken, but there is a lot more than that. Writing and written communication in general has many of its specific elements and mastering them takes a lot of time and practice. As demanding as learning writing itself, is also teaching writing. It is a process during which teachers try to explain to their students the right use of characteristics of writing such as **permanence**, **production time**, **distance**, **orthography**, **complexity**, **vocabulary** and **formality** (Brown, 2000, p. 341). At the same time, there are several other important issues of writing that students need to master such as **spelling** and **punctuation** which has a crucial impact on the meaning of the message. Last but not least, distinguishing between **genres** and paying attention to **cohesion** and **coherence** are issues that also need to be presented and acquired by students.

Apart from the above mentioned characteristics of writing, we also distinguish **modes of writing**. According to the *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, we distinguish between four modes of writing: **expository** writing, **descriptive** writing, **narrative** writing and **argumentative** (sometimes also called **persuasive**) writing. In the table below, I provide their short descriptions as they were explained in the dictionary.

Table 1: Modes of writing (Richards, Jack C. & Schmidt R., 2010, p. 371)

Descriptive writing	Narrative writing	Expository writing	Argumentative writing
provides a verbal picture or account of a person, place or thing	reports an event or tells the story of something that happened	provides information about and explains a particular subject (giving examples, describing a process of doing or making something, etc.)	attempts to support a controversial point or defend a position on which there is a difference of opinion

Concerning categorizing **creative writing**, linguistic sources and dictionaries differ. Sometimes it is listed as the fifth category next to the above mentioned ones, sometimes it is seen as a form of narrative writing. Nevertheless, no matter its category, as a tool for developing language skills – especially writing and reading, creative writing has a promising future that has been proclaimed by many professionals in the field of ESL/EFL (English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign language) all over the world. It definitely deserves teachers' as well as students' attention. In the following chapters of the theoretical part I will thus provide information on how it can be exploited as a tool in teaching English and what benefits it can bring.

1.2 Creative Writing

“When I went to college I took a creative writing class and decided in a week to be a writer.”

—David Guterson

To provide a definition of creative writing at the very beginning of this chapter, I would like to cite words of Ken Hyland (2002) who argues that “we can see [creative writing as] any writing, fiction or non-fiction that occurs outside of everyday professional, journalistic, academic and technical forms of writing. Most typically we think of novels, short stories and poems in this category, but it can also include screenwriting and playwriting, which are texts to be performed, and creative non-fiction such as personal and journalistic essays” (p. 229). This shows us that creative writing covers a broad area of texts serving many different purposes. However, Hyland (2002) also points out that contrary to academic writing which is focused on “rhetorical conventions and discourse expectations of disciplinary communities” (p. 229), the main focus of creative writing is on **self-expression**.

Recently, creative writing has become an independent academic discipline (Hyland, 2002, p. 229), especially at the universities in the United States. Students usually enrol to particular creative writing courses, choose between fiction, poetry, screenwriting or playwriting and further develop their writing and editing skills in the particular area (Hyland, 2002, p. 229). Finally, at the end of their studies, they earn either bachelor or master's degree, depending on their study program.

Despite opening creative writing programs and courses at the world's major universities, it has become quite popular in recent years also in terms of its usage in EFL teaching. Just to illustrate the popularity of the phrase, I would like to mention the number of hits when "creative writing" is typed into Google search. In an instant, about 36,000,000 results emerge which proves it to be a topic of great interest. According to *Google Trends*, the issue is currently mostly searched in Trinidad & Tobago, Australia & New Zealand, Ireland, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Singapore, United States and South Africa (Google Trends, 2015). This also reflects the countries from which professionals publishing articles and books about creative writing come from or the regions where they work.

One of the leading figures in the area of using creative writing in teaching English is Alan Maley, who published numerous articles concerning creative writing in teaching English on well-known teaching-related websites and journals. As an example of the websites, I would like to mention *Teachingenglish.org.uk* powered by British Council and BBC. His article based on a short-scale survey can serve as a guide for those who are just at their beginning with using creative writing in their classrooms (Maley, 2009).

At this point, however, it is necessary to mention that in my thesis, I will not deal with creative writing as an activity leading towards becoming a published author. On the contrary, I will pay attention to using features of creative writing as a tool for developing writing skills in teaching English as a foreign language. The aim of the actual use of creative writing features in teaching English is then to allow students to express themselves freely, raise their motivation, creativity and imagination and practise writing skills.

1.3 Creative Writing and Motivation

Creative writing, as supported by various professionals in the field of language teaching, is beneficial for students in many respects. Not only it **entertains** students, but it also **fosters** their **artistic expression**, **explores** the **functions and values of writing**, **clarifies thinking**, **stimulates** their **imagination**, helps them in their **search for identity** and last but not least it **enables them to learn to read and write** (Tompkins, 1982, p. 718-721). Its engaging nature allowing students to express themselves and present their world views also helps teachers to raise students' motivation.

Motivation itself is quite a complicated issue which is hard to define in simple terms. There have been many psychological studies during the past century aimed at explaining human motivation. However, their conclusions differ considerably, depending on the particular school, its researchers and their beliefs. One of the possible definitions is provided by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which states that motivation can be seen as “forces acting either on or within a person to initiate behaviour. The word is derived from the Latin term *motivus* (“a moving cause”), which suggests the activating properties of the processes involved in psychological motivation” (Petri, 2014). Dörnyei (2001) simplifies it a bit which results in the following definition: “motivation explains why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it and how long they are willing to sustain the activity” (p. 7).

In teaching and learning English (as well as any other foreign language), motivation is indispensable. “Students motivated to learn about a topic are apt to engage in activities they believe will help them learn, such as attend carefully to the instruction, mentally organize and rehearse the material to be learned, take notes to facilitate subsequent studying, check their level of understanding, and ask for help when they do not understand the material (Zimmerman, 2000). Collectively, these activities improve learning” (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Creative writing might be then seen as an activity boosting student’s motivation because it allows learners to express their ideas freely, create something brand new as well as enjoy playing with language. This view is also supported by Maley who states in his article about creative writing that: “[p]erhaps most notable is the dramatic increase in self-confidence and self-esteem which CW tends to develop among learners. Learners also tend to discover things for themselves about the language... and about themselves too, thus promoting personal as well as linguistic growth. Inevitably, these gains are reflected in a corresponding growth in positive motivation” (Maley, 2009).

It is right at this point, when it should be pointed out that in order to learn successfully and keep students motivated, it is extremely important for students to have healthy self-esteem. As Dörnyei further explains, “self-esteem and self-confidence are like the foundations of a building: if they are not secure enough, even the best technology will be insufficient to build solid walls over them. You can employ your most creative motivational ideas, but if students have basic doubts about themselves, they will be unable to ‘bloom’ as learners” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 86). Using creative writing can be beneficial for students with a low self-esteem, for it provides them space

for self-discovering and self-expression, gradually allowing them to realize their abilities and hopefully also raise motivation. However, teachers should be careful about their expectations since “the study of motivational strategies is still a largely uncharted territory in L2 education. There is no doubt that student motivation can be consciously increased by using creative techniques, but we know too little about the details of how this could or should happen” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 144).

Nonetheless, as the main guidelines for creating motivating surroundings in a classroom in which teachers would like to use creative writing as one of the tools, the following motivational strategies can be used. They are listed in the table below with their numbers reflecting Dörnyei’s original list (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 138-144). This selection is suggested by Maley who proposes that these are also the key conditions which should be “met in a well-run creative writing class” (Maley, 2012).

Table 2: Key conditions which should be met in a well-run creative writing class (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 138-144; Maley, 2012)

5	Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom
6	Promote the development of group cohesiveness.
13	Increase the students’ expectancy of success in particular tasks and in learning in general.
17	Make learning more stimulating and enjoyable by breaking the monotony of classroom events.
18	Make learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by increasing the attractiveness of tasks.
19	Make learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learners by enlisting them as active task participants.
20	Present and administer tasks in a motivating way.
23	Provide students with regular experiences of success.
24	Build your learners’ confidence by providing regular encouragement.
28	Increase student motivation by promoting cooperation among the learners.
29	Increase student motivation by actively promoting learner autonomy.
33	Increase learner satisfaction.
34	Offer rewards in a motivational manner.

1.4 Creative Writing and Learners

Creative writing is often wrongly believed to be an activity aimed especially at talented learners and many times it is connected predominantly with practising one's mother tongue. However, as Sharples (1999) notes, "Creativity is not a power held by a few gifted individuals, but is an everyday activity" (p. 36). All students can be creative, think creatively and write creatively. In fact, practising one's creativity is an activity that can enrich both one's life and his cultural surroundings. If the person succeeds in his creative-driven career, also culture and science can benefit greatly. First and foremost, however, students need practice. As Sharples (1999) adds, "Great creativity is usually the product of a long apprenticeship and considerable effort" (p. 37).

A large part of the 'considerable effort' can be done at school by using numerous challenging and creative activities. They can be used effectively in many classes – especially the language ones.

2 Theoretical Aspects of Using Creative Writing in English Classrooms

In the previous chapter I paid attention to describing and defining creative writing as an approach to practising language and writing skills, as a motivating activity allowing learners to boost their creativity. In this chapter, I would like to provide a description of the areas of language learning on which using of creative writing in teaching English might have a positive effect. I will focus on the outcomes and the areas of language learning that are likely to benefit the most. I will also provide an example of a successful creative writing project from abroad.

2.1 Creative Writing is Different from Other Writing Activities

Even though it may seem to be widely believed that creative writing activities might be time consuming and not for everybody, many leading figures in the field agree that using them can enrich all of the students, help them with clarifying their thinking and also help them become more creative.

In English classes, there is usually hardly any time left for unusual and out-of-ordinary activities, since practising all four skills takes all of the available time. Fortunately, using creative writing in teaching English allows students to practise not only writing as a skill, but also practise grammar and vocabulary, acquire new vocabulary, stretch imagination, develop creativity as well as boost self-confidence and self-expression.

Main difference is here the motivation and a sense of informality and playfulness which goes hand in hand with allowing students to express themselves freely, not in the previously marked out borders. Its contribution can also be seen in its introduction to a world of literature and books. If learners find their way towards their own creative writing, they are also likely to become gradually interested in literature and reading, which has unfortunately been in decline recently.

2.1.1 The First Story Project

As an example of a successful usage of creative writing in education and developing learners' skills, I would like to mention the *First Story* project, taking place in the United Kingdom. It first launched in London in 2008 and then spread to other parts of the country. Its main focus is on "schools in which more than 50% of pupils are considered deprived according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index and/or [General Certificate of Secondary Education] results fall in the lowest third of the national distribution" (First Story, 2015). As described on the official website of the project, it "strives to support and inspire creativity, literacy and confidence in challenging UK secondary schools and their communities" (First Story, 2015). During an academic year, First Story provides creative-writing workshops led by writers-in-residence, publishes the works of students in a professionally produced anthology and hosts book-launch events (First Story, 2015). Concerning the outcome and benefits of these workshops, Jess Summers, regional co-ordinator for First Story, explains "partly it's about giving the students a chance to really express themselves, but it is wider than that. By developing their imagination and their creativity it feeds back into all their other lessons. Time after time, teachers tell us that the work of those pupils who have taken part in *First Story* improves right across the board. Being able to express emotions, explore ideas and formulate persuasive arguments are skills they will have for

life” (“Can creative writing boost pupils confidence?”, 2015). According to the report available on the same website, “97% of teachers said that their students’ writing has improved beyond predicted levels” (First Story, 2015).

2.2 Creative Writing in Teaching English

In the same manner as the *First Story* project, features of creative writing can be positively used also in teaching English. The idea is also supported by Alan Maley in his article *Creative writing for students and teachers* (2012) which has already been mentioned at the beginning of the thesis. There, he compares the main characteristics of creative writing with characteristics of expository writing as he believes that these two modes of writing are contrasting to each other. He proposes the following chart:

Table 3: Contrasting modes of writing (Maley, 2012)

Expository writing	Creative writing
Instrumental	Aesthetic
Facts	Imagination
External control	Internal discipline
Conventions	Stretching rules
Logical	Intuitive
Analytical	Associative
Impersonal	Personal
Thinking mode	Feeling mode (plus thinking!)
Appeal to the intellect	Appeal to the senses
Avoidance of ambiguity	Creation of multiple meanings

He later explains that whereas expository writing is mainly instrumental, focused on providing facts, it “rests on a framework of externally imposed rules and conventions. These range from grammatical and lexical accuracy and appropriacy to specific genre constraints. The aim of expository writing is to be logical, consistent and impersonal and to convey the content as unambiguously as possible to the reader” (Maley, 2012). Creative writing, on the other hand, focuses on its aesthetic function. As he continues in his explanation, he adds that creative writing “often proceeds by

stretching the rules of the language to breaking point, testing how far it can go before the language breaks down under the strain of innovation” (Maley, 2012). This can be especially helpful in terms of practising grammatical structures, exploring new ways of expressing oneself and exploring vocabulary. The unique combination of feelings and thoughts present during creative writing can definitely enrich every student taking part in it.

Supporting using creative writing in teaching foreign language, Gill James argues that “a learner can be creative with their language when they only have a little to play with. If they do that at the start, when they know more they will also make better use of that. [...] Less can in fact become more” (James, 2006). In her article, she proposes several activities which can be used in classrooms as well as provides several examples of works created by her students. I would like to use one of the examples she provides to illustrate that even on the level of beginners, creative writing can be used to practise newly acquired vocabulary through writing poems. As an example, she provides the following haiku poem:

“From Norway, in Wales,
Blond hair, blue eyes, tall and slim,
My name is Sandra” (James, 2006).

From the example above it is apparent that there is no need of complicated language structures and advanced vocabulary to begin using new language in a creative way. In this way, students can learn various forms of poetry, try to write them themselves as well as to explore and practise numerous literary styles. As James explains, she states that “the learner should use new language creatively as soon as they can. [...] Using learnt language creatively is a tool to reinforcing that language. [...] The creativity comes in making the most of the language that is known” (James, 2006).

2.3 Areas Positively Affected by Using Creative Writing

Alan Maley conducted a survey among 50 leading ELT professionals in order to “justify the inclusion of creative writing, in addition to aesthetic reading, in our language teaching practices” (Maley, 2009). The questionnaire survey took place in

2006 and from its results he states the following areas, which are positively affected by using creative writing in teaching English. For a good arrangement, I put them into the following table.

Table 4: Areas which are positively affected by using creative writing in teaching English (Maley, 2009).

a)	grammar, vocabulary, phonology, discourse	significant gains in grammatical accuracy, appropriacy and originality of lexical choice, and sensitivity to rhythm, rhyme, stress and intonation
b)	playfulness	playing with language
c)	development of a ‘second language personality’	taking risks with the language, exploring it without a fear of reproof
d)	focus on the right side of the brain	feelings, physical sensations, intuition
e)	increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	which creative writing tends to develop among learners; it leads to a corresponding increase in motivation
g)	creative reading	the development of aesthetic reading skills provides the learner with a better understanding of textual construction, and this feeds into their writing
h)	improve of expository writing	by helping learners to develop an individual voice, it makes their factual writing more genuinely expressive

As Maley himself sums up his findings, “one of the interesting facts to emerge was a widespread belief among teachers of writing that [creative writing] had a positive effect on students’ writing of expository texts and helped them develop that much-desired but rarely-delivered ‘authentic voice’” (Maley, 2009). This is a very positive view on the benefits of using creative writing in teaching English, supported by experienced teachers of the language.

In the following five subchapters, I will thus pay attention to those areas of language learning which are likely to be practised and developed the most by using creative writing in teaching English. Namely I will discuss lexis, grammar, sentence structure, understanding of reading as well as self-expression and the ways they can be practised.

2.3.1 Lexis

To be able to use a particular lexical item correctly and distinguish between its various meanings (i.e. phrasal verbs), it is necessary for students to begin using it in its natural context as soon as possible.

As already suggested above by Gill James, students can begin using language creatively even as beginners. Even the limited amount of words they know can serve well to create a poem or a very short story. Creative writing tasks can help with both practising newly acquired lexical items as well as using those already known. Sometimes students have strong vocabulary, however, they do not know how to use all of the lexical items in their appropriate contexts and thus limit themselves on using only the basic ones. Creative writing can help them to learn new contexts for those lexical items, begin naturally using phrasal verbs, collocations and idioms as well as master their meanings and the differences between them. When asked to create a text on their own, students can learn how to work with dictionaries, especially English-English dictionary which is very beneficial in learning the language. Working with dictionaries and using lexical items in their written form is beneficial also for practising correct spelling. Teachers might create exercises asking students to write a poem using words such as bed/bad, hat/head, etc. to practise their correct spelling and meaning in context. The outcome may subsequently lead to a better remembering of these words.

Creative writing tasks can also be used to practise nouns with irregular plural number, thematic vocabulary (by giving students a particular topic, a set of lexical items from that topic), synonyms and antonyms. For some students it is actually more beneficial to create a sentence containing the word on their own than to read an example in a course book. Struggling with creating a sentence and using a particular lexical item appropriately might have a positive effect on remembering it, especially when it is problematic.

There are numerous tasks that a teacher can prepare as well as modifications of already existing tasks which can be exploited using creative writing. Students might be for example given word webs and then asked to use a certain number of the items and write a short poem or a story. They can be asked to create a poem or a story beginning only with certain letters as well as they can be asked to use as much vocabulary from a last lesson or only some parts of speech – to practise any of them (i.e. adjectives, numerals, verbs, adverbs, etc.). Teacher might also decide on using creative writing

techniques to pre-teach several lexical items that will be a part of the following exercise or unit.

As well as practising already known lexical items, reading their stories, poems or any other created texts aloud, students also practise their correct pronunciation. Advanced learners can then practise also stress and rhythm and voicing and linking.

2.3.2 Grammar

Like practising lexis, also grammatical structures can be practised by the means of creative writing. Learning grammar is according to Scrivener (2011) a complicated process where learning the rules does not necessarily mean that the student is able to use them himself and actually understand them (p. 157). As Scrivener (2011) points out, there should be “some way that students can transfer this studied knowledge into a living ability to use the language” (p. 157). Creative writing can serve as this means of practising the newly acquired grammatical structures as well as the language patterns that students learned in the past. Poems, stories, jokes, articles, fairytales etc. can be focused on practising various aspects of grammar - be it tenses, participles, articles, parts of speech, passive constructions, conditionals, etc.

In this context, using creative writing tasks as homework can give students an opportunity to write as much as they need without being limited by the amount of time available in the classroom. The more writing students do and the earlier they develop a writing habit, the better for their English language practise.

Concerning the possible exercises, students might be given a picture or a set of pictures, with the teacher asking them to use only particular tenses or participles. They can be given various words in a sack (past participles, nouns, adjectives, auxiliary verbs) to draw from a hat and subsequently write a story, poem or a joke containing all these words. There are countless modifications that can be used to practise students' writing this way.

2.3.3 Sentence Structure

Hand in hand with lexis and grammar goes sentence structure. The ability to create sentences in English is crucial because of its fixed word order. Students whose mother tongue is a synthetic language need to accept it and understand that changed word order also changes the meaning of the sentence. Especially with students who are used to translate for themselves this might be complicated and a cause of problems. Again, creative writing can help these students because of providing a guilt free surroundings allowing them practising language in a creative way without a fear of failure. Forming sentences – affirmatives, negatives and questions can be practised as well as active and passive voice, etc.

2.3.4 Understanding

In creative writing it is common for students to read pieces written by their fellow students. This allows them not only to read what their colleagues have written, but also discover their style, realize differences between their writing and the writing of other classmates. It also allows them to think about the texts critically, realize mistakes that fellow students do and last but not least, practise understanding of a written text. By reading other people's work, student might realize that what he or she tries to convey through his or her writing does not necessarily have to be conveyed by the text. Sometimes people think that what they have written is an apt description of a situation, however, when read by anyone else, they may find out that they failed to transfer the exact thought which they attempted. Writing creatively may help students realize this and thus help them succeed next time. At the same time, this practise of expressing oneself may lead to a better understanding between students themselves as well as help them communicate with their surroundings more openly and successfully.

As an exercise, students may be given pieces of their fellow students and asked to provide a short summary or rewrite it to convey the same meaning using different words or transform it into a poem, etc. depending on the particular level of learners and other instructions given.

2.3.5 Self-expression, Self-esteem and Self-discovery

Creative writing proves invaluable also in terms of self-discovery, self-expression and developing self-esteem. Being able to express oneself freely, present one's own thoughts, beliefs and ideas is not always easy and it is not always desired (in regular classes and majority of subjects). In fact, an overwhelming majority of subjects does not create conditions for expressing oneself in a creative and free way. Teaching languages has the capacity of allowing students to present their world views, thoughts, emotions and feelings through i.e. creative writing. It is a challenging and at the same time stress-relieving activity raising students their intrinsic motivation and allowing them to believe in themselves and their abilities. This view is also supported by Maley who states in his article that “the dramatic increase in self-confidence and self-esteem which creative writing tends to develop among learners leads to a corresponding increase in motivation” (Maley, 2012).

Learners generally do not have enough opportunities to be creative in their mother tongue classes, in schools they are usually taught the skills of expository writing and thus they might actually believe that they are not talented or skilled enough; that creative writing is predominantly for gifted people. Usually in schools students learn how to write essays, letters and other rather formal writings such as curriculum vitae; however, poetry is scarcely written. Using it in teaching English (and teaching foreign languages in general) might thus lead to self-discovery of students who have never actually tried to find out how great writers they can be. Creative writing thus can help students reveal and discover their skills and develop them.

2.4 Summary of the Benefits

From the previous subchapters it is evident that creative writing can be used as a tool for developing students' skills on all language levels. Beginners can create short poems using only lexical items, whereas advanced learners can practise more complicated syntactic structures and advanced vocabulary. Using newly acquired structures and lexical items in a creative way increases chances for their remembering, as well as brings the opportunity to actively use constructions and lexical items in such surroundings that would normally only scarcely occur or would not occur at all. Writing

creatively can also lead to an independent language use on the side of students, which is also desirable.

Moreover, if a learner decides to write a story (set in a particular time and space), it is inevitable to do a research about the period. The learner thus independently searches information about cultural and social history, geography and other important issues directly connected with the text being created. What is also important to mention is the fact that students usually do the research voluntarily and independently, which increases the probability that they will remember it.

Creative writing also allows students to think deeply about situations that they would normally take for granted. Once they write them, they can get back to them, re-think them, change them and re-live them. If the writing is personal, it can help its author to understand people and situations surrounding him or her and also understand the world around them as well as cope with various issues of their personal lives. Creative writing with its artistic value also brings them amusement and enjoyment.

Using creative writing in the classroom can also pave the way for innovation. By sharing their works, students can inspire each other, stretch their imagination and try to bring something new and unexplored. At the same time, by using creative writing exercises, teachers can “add a sense of production, excitement, and performance to the language classroom, to give students the opportunity to say something surprising and original, even while they practise new aspects of language” (Spiro, 2004, p. 5). As Spiro (2004) points out, “the activities [do not] require special slots in the timetable designated ‘creative writing’. They can be integrated into the course book and can support the language syllabus, whether it is functional, notional, situational, grammatical, humanistic, all of these or none of these” (p. 6).

3 Practical Aspects of Using Creative Writing in English Classrooms

As I have already explained how beneficial creative writing might be in terms of language learning and practising, I would like to pay attention to its actual use in classrooms and its possible obstacles. In the following lines I will discuss the role of the teacher, the relationship between the teacher and students, approach to creative writing, language play, poetry and prose as well as possible topics. Last but not least, I will describe possible obstacles that might occur in the classroom, the issue of evaluation

and assessment of creative writing, the importance of democratic surroundings and the outcome of creative writing and its publishing.

3.1 Role of the Teacher in Creative Writing

At the basis of each relationship are its participants. In language teaching, there are students (or learners) on one side and a teacher on the other. In regular classes, they usually have different positions – students should try to learn as much as possible and the teacher should guide the students and provide them with enough opportunities to practise and use the language themselves.

In terms of creative writing, however, both of the participants share their goal – to practise their writing skills, stretch their imagination, use their creativity, play with language, express themselves and share their feelings, emotions and texts.

One might object here that the teacher is not in the classroom to practise, however, as Maley points out in his article – and I agree, “there is little point in exhorting learners to engage in [creative writing] unless we do so too. The power of the teacher as model, and as co-writer is inestimable” (Maley, 2009). The more the teacher writes and shares with students, the better connection might be created between them, and the better outcome it can bring in terms of practising English.

This gradually suggests that as much as the teacher can give to his students, he can also gain back from his students, which makes it an activity worth the time and effort. Not only students, but also teachers can experience its benefits. According to Maley, “[t]eachers of [creative writing] tend also to be better teachers of writing in general” (Maley, 2009).

However, apart from role-modelling, there are more benefits that teachers can get. By sharing various texts with students, the teacher can sooner understand personalities of his or her students, their struggles and relationships which can later have positive effect on the development of their relationship and creative classroom atmosphere. This view is also supported by Maley who states that “[creative writing] seems to have an effect on the writer’s level of energy in general. This tends to make teachers who use [creative writing] more interesting to be around, and this inevitably impacts on their relationships with students” (Maley, 2009). In my view, teachers’ participation in creative writing tasks is thus essential.

3.2 Language Teaching Approaches and Creative Writing

So far I have discussed that creative writing can be beneficial to both teachers and students. In methodology of language learning there are various approaches distinguished, from grammar-translation method and audio-lingual method across communicative language teaching, Suggestopaedia to Total Physical Response. No matter which method is used or prevails in teaching English, creative writing tasks can be used along most of them (i.e. warm-ups, homework). It can be used for short warm-up exercises to review vocabulary of grammar from the last lesson or it can be stretched across the whole lesson in case of a more demanding task. At the same time it can be used predominantly as homework activity allowing students to spend as much time as they need on their writing or it can be used as filler. At the same time, English creative writing can be used in a separate course, taking place online on the Internet or at school as an extra-curricular activity. Taking all of the mentioned into account, I see creative writing as a truly versatile tool which offers a lot of potential for engaging and creative learning.

3.3 Literary Form and Language Play

At the very beginning, I believe it is necessary to point out that all of the activities, poems, stories, etc., can be used **along with the language syllabus**. Teachers can choose either from already existing exercises available in books, articles, and on blogs by authors such as Jane Spiro, Alan Maley, Regie Routman, Jayakaran Mukundan and others or they can easily prepare their own, depending on their creativity, the language area they would like to practise with their students, and according to their needs.

Generally, when preparing an activity, teachers can choose between two basic literary forms – poetry and prose. Both of them offer many genres to explore and both of them have their characteristics which can help students in the development of their language skills.

3.3.1 Poetry

Despite poetry being often left out of classrooms, writing it can be truly useful in learning English. Many leading authorities in ELT agree that poetry “stimulates [and] wakes us up to see things in new ways, think of things in new ways” (Scrivener, 2011, p. 366). Poetry offers numerous options to become creative – short and long poems (using fixed meter or free verse), song lyrics, acrostic poems, haiku, limerick, drama or rhymes, with all of them allowing students to play with language and discover themselves and their abilities. For these and many other reasons poetry should not be overlooked in teaching language, “it ought to be presented to all children as a natural expressive medium as soon as they walk into school” (Crystal, 1998, p. 220).

In introduction to her book where she presents numerous exercises for writing creative poetry, Jane Spiro (2004) explains that communicative approach is not enough in teaching. She believes that “when language learners are invited to speak more fully, they can be funny, wise, child-like, playful, witty, sentimental, philosophical, experimental. They can be many things there is no room to be in the functional classroom. The progress made by humanistic and communicative teaching and by the different pedagogic approaches to language can combine to take us further as learners and teachers” (p. 5).

At the same time, reading and hearing poetry in our everyday life is more common than we might realize. Just when we turn on the TV or a radio, various jingles and advertisements try to catch our attention by (many times) alliterative slogans, rhyming, word plays and sometimes using unusual grammatical structures (i.e. McDonalds – I’m lovin’ it). Jane Spiro (2004) also supports this, stating that “‘poetic language’ is more and more part of modern English. It is the way we make people, places and products, feelings and experiences memorable” (p. 11).

Poetry forms offer learners several features that are especially useful in practising their language skills. Spiro talks predominantly about repetition, pattern and length of the poem. Repetition may be seen as working in the same way as language drills where the structure is the same and lexical items change. Like repetition, also patterns can serve for practising various language structures as well as spelling and rhyming. The “important difference between poetry and the language drill [is however] the emotional content” (Spiro, 2004, p. 8). As I have already indicated, writing poetry is useful for learners at all language levels. Beginners can work with lexical items,

alliteration and patterns of sound whereas more advanced learners can pay attention also to stress, rhythm, idiomatic expressions and collocations, complex grammar, etc.

“Writing a poem [also] includes exchanging ideas, writing, then editing, asking friends to read and respond, and rewriting. It gives real and meaningful practice in all the skills of writing. [...] The exciting thing about poems is that the poet is the one who makes up the rules” (Spiro, 2004, p. 10–11).

Last but not least, while being creative, students also learn about terminology, poetry types and authors which otherwise might be easily forgotten. Creating verses on their own as well as reading poetry can thus help students to understand it, think about it and become interested in it outside of the classroom. For all of the possible benefits, using poetry writing in teaching English is definitely worth trying.

3.3.2 Prose

Many of the details presented about poetry in the lines above, can be pinpointed also when describing the features of writing prose. Whether we realize it or not, stories make a large part of our daily life. Whether we talk to our friends, children or family members and share our experiences with them or watch a movie, news broadcasting on TV or reading magazines, we constantly come across stories. They can be both entirely made-up as well as true, depending on context, nevertheless, its basic features and purpose does not change.

According to Jane Spiro (2007), “stories practise all kinds of language. In a good story, we need to describe places and people, write dialogues using different voices, make things happen, show the results and causes of things: we can discuss and argue; we can use parts of letters or diaries. Some writers even include recipes and menus in their novels” (p. 6). For this reason, writing stories can be seen as a beneficial activity for language learners who can serve – as Spiro (2007) suggests – “specific language practice of tenses, descriptive adjectives, reporting verbs, for development of extensive writing that includes narrative, description, dialogue and character development, prepare students for the written narrative components of exams [and] encourage learners to read more appreciatively” (p. 6).

As well as writing poetry, also prose offers various subgenres that students can find interesting. Short stories, fables, fairy tales, mysteries or horror stories can be

chosen, depending on the topic and season (Halloween is for example a perfect opportunity for practising writing horror stories as well as fairy tales can be written before Christmas). By writing stories, students gradually learn about preparation, drafting and editing which are important issues that should have enough attention in both mother tongue lessons as well as the foreign language ones.

Story writing also offers students the opportunity to practise both formal and informal writing because short stories can have many different settings and plots. By composing a story, learners also train the memory and in case of writing a longer piece – they practise also clarity. In brief, using prose writing leads to writing both imaginative and real stories and their complexity depends only on the level of students, their enthusiasm, interest in a subject, etc.

3.3.3 Language Play

Humour, writing, fantasizing, imagination, fun and language play leads to – or is a direct outcome of creativity. Closely connected to using poetry and prose in developing writing skills is thus language play. Since being small children people have appreciated the playfulness that language offers by learning various nursery rhymes as well as creating their own ones. Language play has also been an area of interest of well-known linguists such as Guy Cook and David Crystal. They both propose that playing with language plays an important role in learning a language.

Language play has been present in people's history probably since ever. Both Cook and Crystal agree that language play is common for both children as well as adults. Cook argues that as much time as children spend imagining other worlds, about the same amount of time adults spend fantasizing. All of us are used to watching movies, both in TV and cinema, listening to music as well as reading books and magazines. Crystal (1998) argues that “ludic language exists in hundreds of different genres and adds enjoyment to our daily lives in many routine ways” (p. 6). For this reason it is very useful to incorporate language play also to teaching. Moreover, Crystal (1998) adds that “any aspect of linguistic structure is available to become the focus of language play” (p. 9), which supports the view that using creative writing in teaching and learning languages is actually unlimited. “Language play is natural, spontaneous and universal. [...] It is not solely a matter of humour, after all, but involves notions of

enjoyment, entertainment, intellectual satisfaction and social rapport” (Crystal, 1998, p. 93). The same way as everybody enjoys it, also students generally enjoy writing, creating and playing with language. It is a natural way of learning while playing.

According to Crystal (1998, p. 179) language play helps us learn our language. I believe the same is true also for learners of foreign languages. Taking into consideration that we in general tend to play with language in all ages and surroundings (Crystal, 1998), using elements of a language play in teaching English, especially with creative writing, can be a helpful tool, allowing students to enjoy the moment of creativity, share their feelings and emotions as well as practise their language skills.

Crystal (1998, p. 187) argues that language play is a permanent bridge between the familiar and unfamiliar linguistic world. “Manipulating structure brings an increased awareness of the way language works. At the same time it provides personal enjoyment (Crystal, 1998, p. 220) and allows memory training.

3.4 Resources, Materials and Possible Topics

Once I have answered the question asking why can creative writing be helpful and what does it do, another one arouses, proposing where to find useful resources and what topics to pay attention to.

The strength of creative writing activities is in their versatility. In fact, many of regular reading/writing exercises featured in course books and workbooks can be easily modified to serve the purpose. Moreover, teachers can develop their own materials with exercises and share them with other teachers as well as books and websites of leading figures in the field of using creative writing in teaching can be consulted. As I already mentioned, Jane Spiro, Alan Maley, Regie Routman have produced and gathered a wonderful collection of creative writing activities, suitable for learners of all levels and ages. They also provide commentaries to many of the activities as well as their purpose in English language learning.

Collections of valuable materials can be also found by authors paying attention to using creative writing in practising English as a mother tongue. After adjusting these exercises to the EFL surroundings, these activities can also be used successfully.

It is however important to choose topics according to students interests. The outcome will be probably the best if students feel that what they are doing is important,

beneficial, useful and truly leading towards their development. They not only need to know why they are doing a particular task (with a high level of authenticity), but also the atmosphere in the classroom as well as the way the task is presented to them has its impact on their success.

3.5 Atmosphere in the Classroom

The atmosphere in the classroom is another factor which influences the effect creative writing will have on students. As William C. Dell (1964) noted “the greatest part of writing creatively is believing that [students] can do it. A relaxed atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom can foster such a belief within students by building their confidence” (p. 501). Maley thus encourages teachers “to establish a relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere, where [your] students feel confident enough to let go and not to worry that their every move is being scrutinized for errors” (Maley, 2012). He also stresses the need to encourage students to discuss their work. Students’ writing can be enriched by their discussion of strong and weak parts of the text, approaches, choice of words, etc. The only prerequisite for these beneficial discussions is “establish[ing] an atmosphere where criticism is possible without causing offence” (Maley, 2012).

With establishing inspiring classroom environments goes hand in hand presentation of the task. The role of the teacher is crucial here because he or she can strongly motivate students as well as discourage them. Giving students reason and purpose thus should not be neglected.

3.5.1 Giving Students Reason and Purpose – Presenting a Task, Raising Motivation

While presenting a task, teachers should “whet the students’ appetite” (p. 80) as Dörnyei (2001) suggests because as he later explains, “good task introductions raise the students’ expectations of something interesting and important to come” (p. 80). Especially in terms of creative writing, careful presentation of the task can lead to a better outcome. Even Maley noted that it is not easy for a teacher to predict how

students will react. The outcomes might often be “diverse and unpredictable” (Spiro, 2004, p. 12) and against all odds.

Teachers should especially pay attention to being encouraging, give enough examples and motivate students by popular and well sounding words (Routman, 2000). Dörnyei (2001, p. 80) also suggests the following steps to introduce the task successfully:

- projecting intensity and enthusiasm when introducing the activity
- communicating expectations for students to succeed
- asking students to make guesses and predictions
- pointing out challenging or important aspects of the L2 content to be learned
- providing appropriate strategies to do the task

Subsequently, during the performance of the activity, Regie Routman (2000) also suggests being “on a lookout for writing “gems”—words and phrases that are especially well crafted” (p. 16). Then he proposes pinpointing these gems, reading them aloud for everybody so that students knew the right direction or gained inspiration. He later adds that “noticing the gems serves several purposes. It reinforces something the writer has done well and encourages him to continue, shows the class what a good poem looks like and sounds like, gives students ideas for their own writing, sets expectations for quality” (p. 16).

3.5.2 Publishing the Outcome

One of the motivating factors in encouraging students to immerse into creative writing is also regular publishing of the outcome that students create. Students thus tend to pay attention not only to the topic and the way they express their ideas, but also the quality of their writing.

There are many ways of publishing the outcome – either binding it at the end of the semester or a school year and giving it to students as a memory or publishing it at various public spaces. As other possibilities Maley suggests “giving students a project for publishing work in a simple ring binder, or as part of a class magazine. Almost certainly, there will be students able and willing to set up a class website where work

can be published. Performances, where students read or perform their work for other classes or even the whole school, are another way of making public what they have done” (Maley, 2012).

3.6 Writing Session Format and Frequency

Writing session can take place both in the classroom as well as at home as homework. The length of the writing session can thus vary according to the surroundings. It partially depends on students, their enthusiasm and their language level. It can be expected that writing at home will take longer as there is no time limit. In case of classroom writing sessions, some professionals suggest the following scheme. Routman (2000), who teaches predominantly children (creative poetry writing), recommends the following: “Poetry writing follows the structure and procedures of writing workshop. The whole-class session includes: demonstration (5-15 minutes), sustained writing time and conferencing (20-30 minutes) and sharing and celebrating (10-15 minutes)” (p. 18). The same format can be used in prose writing as well.

Crucial is also the frequency of using activities to develop writing skills. As much as students need to practise other language skills in the classroom, such as listening, speaking and reading, also writing should be practised regularly. In terms of creative writing, Maley suggests using “the activities regularly in order to get the best effects. Maybe once a week is a sensible frequency. If you leave too long between sessions, you have to keep going back to square one. That is a waste of time and energy” (Maley, 2012).

3.7 Possible Obstacles

As well as I have mentioned benefits of creative writing on practising English and developing writing skills, it is inevitable to discuss also various obstacles that might occur in the classroom. It can be anticipated that there will be a certain number of students who are shy, less open and self-confident than the others as well as less willing to share their feelings and emotions in a creative way. Teachers should always think about that and be prepared to encourage those students in a friendly way.

Large classes, mixed ability groups, special interests of girls and boys, and not collaborative students can also be seen as a possible cause of obstacles. However, from my own experience, I believe that creative writing has a capacity and power of removing barriers between both students themselves and a teacher and students.

It may and probably will happen that there will be some students who do not wish to participate in creative writing tasks for various reasons. Teachers should nonetheless bear in mind that no student should be forced into any creative task. Luckily for them, it is highly probable that these students will become interested later after seeing and hearing their fellow student's works and after being motivated by a teacher. The teacher should ask them several times to join the rest of the students as well as encourage them, but definitely not force. The best outcome is only when students participate voluntarily, with their own will to create, write and share.

As another obstacle which might occur one can see teachers' unwillingness to take part in creative writing activities. Even though a teacher might believe in creative writing as a tool for practising English and developing writing skills, he or she might not feel comfortable with producing his or her own texts and sharing it with students. As Routman (2000) emphasises, teacher modelling is especially important for students' writing. "Our own writing—and our willingness to share it—are very powerful models for our students. Even if you are uncomfortable thinking aloud and writing in front of your students, try writing" (p. 19). These are words which I can relate to, because I believe that if students see an interest on the side of the teacher, their motivation and interest into the subject is likely to be raised a great deal.

3.8 Evaluation of Students' Creative Writing

One of the most important and also most complicated issues in terms of using creative writing in teaching English is assessment. "Assessing writing requires patience, a great deal of conscious preparation of assignments and criteria, and painstaking decision-making about student writing" (Crusan, 2010, p. 5).

Before each activity that teachers prepare for their students, they should set or realize its goal in order to evaluate it subsequently. Jane Spiro (2007) suggests the following ideas of evaluating creative writing. I put them into a table for a good arrangement:

Table 5: Ideas of evaluating creative writing (Spiro, 2007, p. 11).

Goal	How to evaluate it
to encourage oral fluency	Make a note of some of the key errors that disturb comprehension, report back on these.
a precise linguistic goal (i.e. correct use of past tenses)	Ask learners to self-correct just this aspect, then check the work again yourself.
to encourage writing fluency	<p>Invite learners to read one another's stories to check for clarity and comprehensibility.</p> <p>Ask them to check with you if there are any parts that they cannot correct or improve for themselves.</p>

Maley supports this view and encourages teachers to overlook various inaccuracies that are not in a focus of a particular area which the activity is focused on. He also recommends recognizing these inaccuracies as “part of the creative process - creative in that the learners are seeking strategies for filling gaps in their knowledge. [...] Cultivating these strategies is an important part of the learning process, and can be used in another lesson as springboards for learning” (Spiro, 2004, p. 10).

When evaluating students' texts, teachers should also pay attention to the complexity of the writing. They should not pay attention only to what and how students write, but also how they evolve as writers and how challenging students are towards their own writing. This view holds also Sharples (1999) who argues that “if we want to encourage children's development of writing abilities we need to take account not only of what children do better from day to day, task to task, but also what they do differently” (p. 31).

Apart from teacher evaluation (or editing) and correcting mistakes, students can be allowed to peer-asses and self-assess their writing. Someone might object that students who are learning the language themselves are not competent enough to assess their peers' or their own writing. On the other hand, as Anna Warren explains:

“[m]odelled through the teacher’s own formative marking, pupils know what the expectations are” (Warren, 2013). Moreover, as Crusan (2010) argues “through assessment, most writers can learn to be more careful evaluators of their own writing as well as the writing of others. This is a necessary skill because many times in life we will be asked for our input and ideas in writing” (Crusan, 2010, p. 9).

3.9 Using Digital Technologies

To practise creative writing with students, there is no longer the limitation of practising it in the classroom. If the teacher and students are interested in using ICT, an online community can be easily established. Creative writing can be practised as e-learning with much or all of the writing created at home without being limited by time. If there are no surroundings for creating a course in e-learning surroundings, a common email account can be created where students and the teacher can post their writings.

At the same time, students can take advantage of using various tools available online – ranging from countless dictionaries to various rhyming tools. I will provide a list of electronic tools in the appendix attached at the end of the thesis. To mention some of the most interesting online tools, which can prove helpful and enrich students writing as well as lead them towards independent learning, I would like to introduce those listed in Appendix 1. They allow students to find rhyming words, create mind maps as well as find synonyms, antonyms, etc. (see Appendix 1).

Summary

The theoretical part explained that using creative writing activities can be a beautiful and exciting area of teaching, allowing teachers to be creative, prepare creative materials and ignite the spark of creativity in students, help them find motivation and learn the language by actually using it themselves, cope with their own mistakes, show them the world of literature and writing. Teachers can also develop their own writing skills as well as get to know their learners, their abilities, worries, dreams and ideas. Using creative writing as a tool for teaching English is thus a unique way of creating a better relationship and understanding of each other in a very human way where next to language skills also other important personal skills such as self-esteem and self-confidence can be developed.

Practical Part

Introduction

Creative writing offers numerous opportunities for developing learners' skills. During my teaching practice in 2013, I let the students draw a few words from a hat (vocabulary focused on Halloween) and asked them to use the words in a short horror story. The next day, to my surprise, all of the students had their homework done and their short stories were brilliant and really entertaining. All of the students in the classroom were in good mood and all of us had a great time reading our stories. Of course there were mistakes in some of their stories, however, the atmosphere in the classroom and active participation of all students including those who might be problematic was unique and really rewarding. I believe that the creative environment and language play can be very helpful in the teaching process as the learning happens in a natural way. This view is also supported by David Crystal who claims that "[r]eading and writing do not have to be a prison-house. Release is possible. And maybe language play can provide the key" (1998, 217).

Next to the activities used in classrooms, students can also be presented with a possibility of exchanging emails or letters with other students from all around the world. This form of creative writing takes places usually in student's free time and is voluntary. Therefore the level of motivation is expected to be high. Hand in hand with it also goes enthusiasm of meeting new people from different cultures, far regions and distant countries and exchanging ideas and experiences. I have started exchanging emails with other students from around the world a decade ago and it definitely brought me several new friends whom I later met and created a nice relationship with them. The decade of exchanging emails with other students was extremely beneficial to me in terms of practising English, and definitely had a positive effect on lexical choice and sentence structure. It also helped me with expressing my ideas clearly as well as with cohesion and coherence of the text, all in a truly entertaining way.

Unfortunately I have not experienced using creative writing activities during my studies at grammar school, nor during my philology studies at the Faculty of Arts. A creative approach towards learning English was something that I missed for a long time,

however, during my studies at the Faculty of Education I took two creative writing courses focused on poetry which provided me with exactly what I missed during my other studies – a creative writing surroundings allowing me to share my own writing with other students of English as well as providing a valuable feedback. Last but not least I met many talented fellow students whose writing would otherwise be unavailable to me.

In my view, creative writing can be used in many cases with majority of students. However, it is important to pay enough attention to preparation of the activities and choosing the right ones that would suit the needs and expectations of the students. For this and many other reasons, I believe that many obstacles can be overcome, either by good choice of activities – tailored to the particular group of students or by a teacher's approach. The outcome that this tool can offer to both teachers and students is in my view very beneficial and therefore worth doing a research.

This part of the thesis will thus be devoted to my research trying to find out whether teachers of English in the Czech Republic have any experience with using creative writing as a tool for teaching English and whether they experienced it themselves in their language classrooms as students. Through a questionnaire survey I will try to find out their views, beliefs and experience which I will later analyse and interpret.

In the following lines of the thesis I will thus discuss the actual research conducted among 39 teachers of English in the Czech Republic. I will introduce the aim of the research, its participants, methodology, questionnaire design, and the questions that I used in order to find out the answers to my research questions. Subsequently, the analysis of the questionnaire survey will follow.

4 **Aim, the Background of the Research and My Presumptions**

The aim of the research is to find out through a questionnaire survey conducted among teachers of English what their attitudes towards using creative writing activities in their lessons are, whether they see creative writing as a tool with a positive effect on developing their students' English language skills and how frequently they actually use it in their teaching practice.

The questionnaire survey should support the exploration of the creative writing as a tool for teaching English provided in the theoretical part and should also shed light on the current situation in Czech schools.

From my preliminary research carried out in spring 2014, through rather informal interviews with seven teachers of English, I understood that using creative writing on a regular basis is not common in English classrooms in Czech schools. Teachers seem to be tied by the syllabus with only a little space for experiments which – concerning the possible benefits of the creative writing presented in the theoretical part of the thesis – is unfortunate. This was also the reason for devoting the practical part of the thesis to finding out what the attitudes and views of teachers of English on the above mentioned issue are.

The research focuses on Czech teachers of English who are at the same time the group of people which could take advantage of the benefits of creative writing the most and thus help their students to foster their imagination, creativity, raise motivation and develop their English language skills.

Hopefully, the questionnaire survey will raise the awareness of creative writing and its possible usage as a tool for teaching English among those who took part in the research.

My **presumptions** before conducting the questionnaire survey were the following:

- a) teachers in Czech schools are aware of the fact that creative writing might be beneficial for their students' language skills development; however they believe they do not have enough time to exploit it themselves with their own classes
- b) teachers are not aware of available literature and exercises that can be easily obtained from the Internet and book stores

- c) teachers would be willing to use creative writing as a tool for teaching English, if the issue was introduced to them beforehand (for example in their formal education)

5 Participants of the Questionnaire Survey

Participants of the questionnaire survey were teachers of English who teach in various schools in the Czech Republic. At the very beginning, I found contacts to a group of teachers of English from various types of schools (primary, secondary, grammar and language schools) and I asked them to fill in the form and then share it with their colleagues – teachers of English. Thus, participants of the research were either asked to fill in the questionnaire directly or they were asked by other teachers of English who have already participated in the research. I took advantage of social networks such as *Facebook* to address particular teachers of English as well as of an email communication.

I have chosen this snowball method of addressing respondents because I intended to share the questionnaire with as many teachers of English as possible with a different background. The only condition for filling in the form was to be a practising teacher of English. Any particular institution was not specified as a condition because I also intended to give space to freelance teachers to fill in the form and share their views on using creative writing in teaching English. Even though I addressed directly and indirectly about 100 potential respondents, only 39 of them submitted the questionnaire.

The sample group was created by the method of snowball sampling because it allowed me to reach as wide and diverse group of teachers as possible. I believe that otherwise it would be impossible for me to address such a number of teachers of English from various regions and schools.

Concerning the particular group of participants, more than one third of the participants (38%) are teachers from language schools. The majority of the respondents teach in South Moravian region (67%), and the average age of their experience as teachers of English is 5.22 years (see chapter 8.1).

6 Methodology of the Research

In February and March 2015, the participants of the survey were provided with a link leading to an online form comprising of 30 questions, designed in order to find out the attitudes and views of teachers of English on using creative writing as a tool for teaching English. My expectations had been to collect 50 responses from teachers of English in the Czech Republic, of various teaching background, working in different regions of the country via snowball method of distribution the questionnaires.

During the process of addressing teachers and gathering data, I tried to prevent collecting data from several teachers working in one institution as the data are likely to be influenced by the way of teaching at a particular institution.

The submitted questionnaires were subsequently evaluated and analysed. To be able to analyse the submitted forms effectively, and to find out the attitudes and views I divided the questions into groups, according to their respective research areas. The areas are the following:

- a) geographical and background data
- b) views on the importance of language skills
- c) views and beliefs about creative writing in teaching English
- d) views on using creative writing activities in classrooms
- e) views on possible obstacles
- f) their own experience with creative writing as learners of English

In the following chapters I will present all questions that were used in the questionnaire as well as I will provide the analysis and its findings. Even though I will deal with the questions in groups according to their respective research areas, I will also pay enough attention to every question from the survey and present the findings. They will be properly discussed and analysed and charts and graphs will be provided. The overall conclusion of the particular research area will follow as well as there will be overall summary of the findings at the end of the chapter 8.

At this point I would also like to note that in this respect, I deliberately decided not to do any case study or a research carried out in a particular school (among groups of students) for the possibly obtained material would not allow me to see the attitudes,

views and beliefs of teachers of English on the subject matter in as large scale as possible (despite being limited by the scope of my thesis).

7 Questions and Questionnaire Design

In the following subchapters I will present the questions included in the questionnaire survey as well as I will describe the questionnaire design. The actual picture of the online questionnaire that I used can be found in Appendix 3, at the very end of the thesis.

7.1 Questions

When creating the questions for the survey, I consulted Zoltán Dörnyei's publication *Questionnaires in Second Language Research*. First, I stated the areas of research and their order and subsequently I began creating questions in order to find answers to the above stated research questions. To ensure the questionnaire will help me find the answers to my questions, I also paid attention to the following issues: keep the sentences as short as possible, keep the introductions medium-length, do not use complicated grammar, order the questions from general to specific, avoid hypothetical questions, add questions concerning geographical data and education of the respondent at the end of the questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 127-129).

7.2 Questionnaire Design

At the very beginning of the research I had to decide whether the questionnaire would be distributed in hard copies or in an electronic form. The later was chosen as the most productive because access to the Internet is easy and distribution in electronic form saves time to respondents. I anticipate that teachers are very busy people and saving their time while filling in the form probably raises the number of respondents, as the longer it takes to go through the form, the less likely it is that the respondent finishes and submits the questionnaire.

When constructing the questionnaire, first of all I had to deal with the completion limit. On the one hand I wanted to gather as much data as possible, on the other hand I tried to prevent it from being counterproductive. Thus I set the completion limit to maximum of 10-15 minutes.

The second issue I faced was the layout of the questionnaire. According to Dörnyei (2003) “attractive and professional design is half the battle in eliciting reliable and valid data” (p. 19). For this reason I did a research into various electronic tools allowing me to create a questionnaire with the appropriate layout. In the end, I chose *Google Forms* as the application allowed me to create a customized form corresponding with the topic of creative writing.

The initial aim was to use various attitudinal questions in order to find out attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values of the teachers in terms of using creative writing as a tool for teaching English. However, this procedure would require using numerous open-ended questions which are complicated to evaluate especially when there are many of them. Incorporating too many open-ended questions would also raise the probability that the teachers would not fill in the form as it would take them too much time. In order to keep the completion limit between 10 and 15 minutes, I decided to use predominantly close-ended multiple-choice questions with only a few open-ended questions where it was necessary.

The total number of the questions used in the questionnaire was 30. The majority of them were close-ended with an option to add a respondent’s own comment to his or her answer (this option is pictured in the graphs as ‘Other’). There were also five open-ended questions included in the form; however, their function was primarily to collect recommended sources if the teachers decided to share them as well as background information about the participants. The rest of the questions were close-ended, with a given set of options as well as yes – no options, however some of them also provided space for adding a comment or providing reasons for the answer.

After constructing the questionnaire I piloted it (asked a few teachers of English to fill it in) and then analysed the items. I came across several possibly problematic questions which I rewrote as well as I deleted some of them and added new ones. The teachers who tested the questionnaire had trouble with understanding questions asking them to share their resources and useful literature. I also asked two different questions which turned out to be likely to be answered the same way. I thus deleted one of them and rewrote the other. After another testing, the questionnaire was ready to use. Finally

I wrote a cover letter and asked a group of teachers to share the questionnaire with other teachers of English.

7.3 Questions Used in the Survey

In this part of the thesis I provide the complete list of questions that were used in the questionnaire in their respective order. For the purposes of this section, I only list the questions without listing the options given to respondents. The options can be found in the graphs in the analysis of each of the questions in chapter 8 as well as they can be found in the complete form attached to the thesis (as it was published on the Internet). It can be found in the last section of the thesis - among the appendices. It is designated as **Appendix 3**.

1. Which language skill do you see as the most important one?
2. Have you ever thought about using creative writing in your lessons in order to help your students develop their language skills?
3. What language skill do you think might be developed the most by using creative writing in teaching English?
4. Do you believe creative writing can be a beneficial tool for teaching English (in terms of motivation, creativity and imagination)?
5. Do you write creatively yourself?
6. Do you (or would you) share your writings with your students?
7. How often do you use creative writing in your English lessons?
8. If you answered very rarely or never, is there anything in particular that prevents you from using it?
9. If you answered very frequently - occasionally, have you encountered any negative responses or problems with your students?
10. What is (or would be) the main source of your creative writing exercises?
11. Are there any sources of creative writing activities that you would like to recommend to other teachers of English?
12. Do you think there is enough time in your lessons for using creative writing exercises?

13. Have you experienced using creative writing exercises during your own English studies?
14. Do you feel competent to use creative writing in your English lessons?
15. Do you believe that creative writing is predominantly aimed at gifted students?
16. How do you (or would you) use creative writing exercises in your own lessons?
17. What form of creative writing do you (or would you) prefer in teaching English?
18. What areas of language learning do you think can improve the most by using creative writing regularly?
19. What area of creative writing might be your weakness?
20. Have you heard about any project in the Czech Republic or abroad using creative writing in language teaching?
21. Do you know about someone (your colleague) who uses creative writing in teaching English on a regular basis?
22. Do you know any electronic tools that might be helpful for students during the writing process?
23. Is there anything that you don't like about the idea of using creative writing in teaching English?
24. How often do you think creative writing should be used in teaching writing?
25. Do you think you could start using creative writing in your lessons immediately?
26. What is the age group of your students?
27. What is your (teaching) qualification?
28. At what type of school do you teach?
29. Where do you teach English?
30. How long have you been teaching English?

7.4 Questions Used in the Survey in Their Respective Research Areas

All the questions used in the questionnaire are evaluated in connection with their respective research areas. All the research areas together with questions (numbers) connected to them are listed in this overview. In the same groups and order they will be evaluated and analysed in chapter 8.

Table 6: Questions used in the survey in their respective research areas

Geographical and Background Data that the Participants of the Survey Provided	26, 27, 28, 29, 30
Views on the Importance of Language Skills	1, 2, 3
Views and Beliefs about Creative Writing in Teaching English	4, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23
Views on Using Creative Writing Activities in Classrooms	6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 24, 25
Views on Possible Obstacles	8, 9, 14, 19
Teacher's Own Experience with Creative Writing as Learners of English	5, 13

8 Analysis of Submitted Questionnaires

The major role in the practical part of the thesis plays the actual analysis of the questionnaires submitted by 39 teachers of English out of about 100 addressed ones. In the following pages I will thus present the findings of the research, supported and illustrated by the numbers in graphs. The questions asked in the survey will not be evaluated in order of their appearance in the form, but according to the research areas described above.

8.1 Geographical and Background Data that the Participants of the Survey Provided

Before paying attention to the issue of creative writing, I would like to evaluate the last five questions of the form and discuss the background data provided by the participants of the survey and thus identify the group of teachers of English which provided their views on using creative writing in teaching English.

8.1.1 Qualification of Respondents

(Question 27)

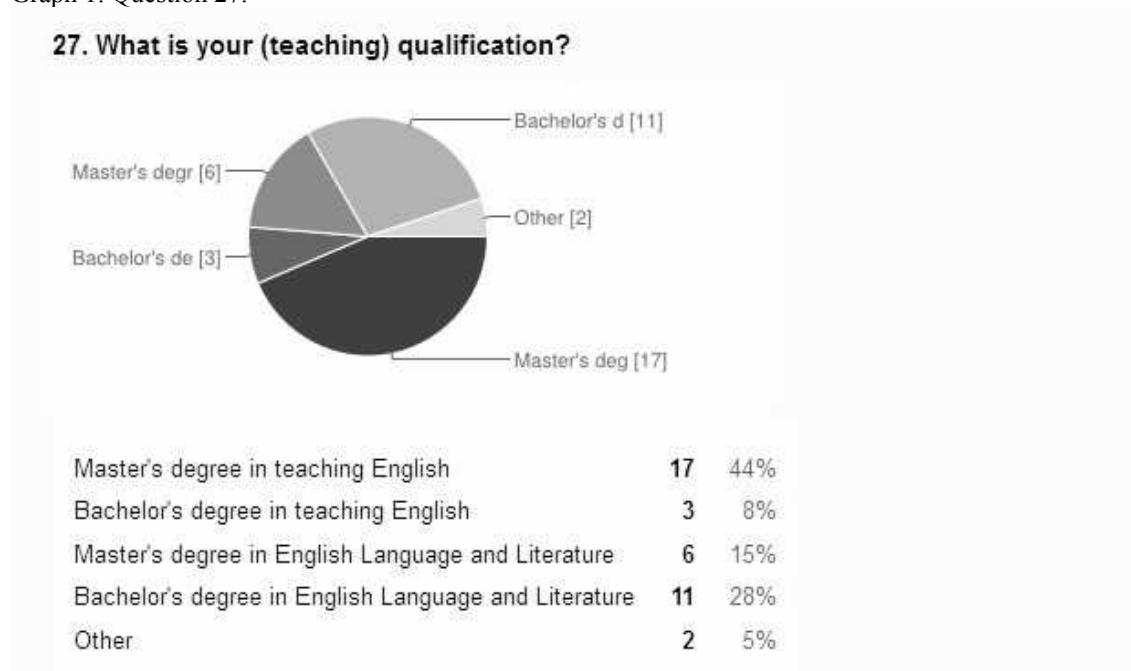
By asking this question I intended to find out the qualification of the teachers taking part in my research and the ratio between those who stated Master's and Bachelor's degrees as their qualification. I am aware of the fact that the teachers in Czech schools come from various backgrounds. For this reason I offered the following options: Master's/Bachelor's degree in teaching English – for those who gained their education at Faculty of Education and Master's/Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature for those who gained their degree at Faculty of Arts. The Other option was offered for those who gained a different degree.

Out of 39 respondents, 17 teachers (44%) stated that their qualification is Master's degree in teaching English. The second major group comprised of 11 teachers of English (28%) who gained their Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. Six teachers (15%) stated their qualification is Master's degree in English Language and Literature, three of them (8%) finished their Bachelor's degree in teaching English. The Other option used two teachers. One of them (3%) stated he or she got a Bachelor's degree in English philology, and is currently doing Master's studies in English language teaching. The other one (3%) also stated that he or she will finish the Master's degree in teaching English this year.

Taking into consideration the numbers presented above, 25 teachers (64%) gained their Master's degree (including two students who are finishing their studies this semester), and 14 teachers (36%) gained their Bachelor's degree. Two thirds of the respondents thus finished their Master's degree, and one third of them gained Bachelor's degree. No one from the respondents was unqualified. The numbers are presented in the graph below.

The overall composition of the participants of the survey comprises of both experienced and qualified teachers of English as well as teachers with philological background. I assume that this proportion might actually reflect the situation in Czech schools and the opinions and attitudes of the teachers of English on using creative writing as a tool for teaching English.

Graph 1: Question 27.

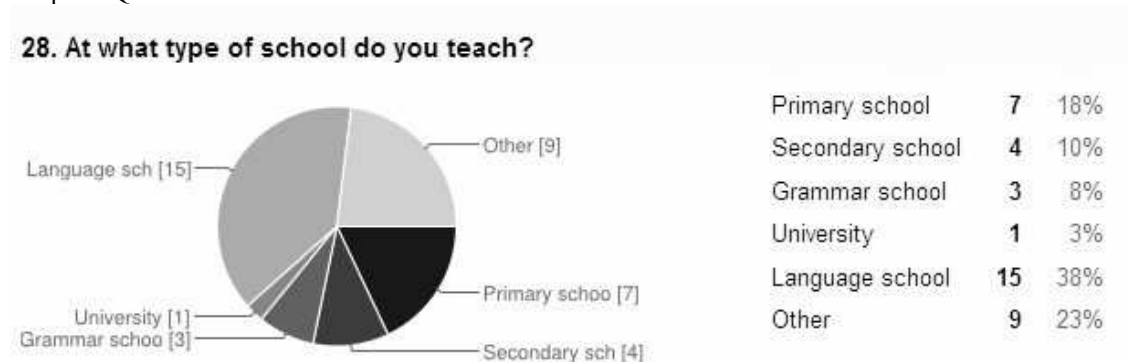


8.1.2 Type of School (Question 28)

In order to be able to find out what type of schools pays the most attention to using creative writing in teaching English, I asked the teachers to state the type of school where they were currently teaching. The results are the following: 15 teachers (38%) work in language school, 7 teachers (18%) stated primary school as their workplace, 4 respondents (10%) checked secondary school, 2 respondents (5%) teach at secondary volitional school, grammar school was checked by 3 teachers (8%), and only one of them teaches at university (3%). The last 7 teachers (18%) stated that they work as freelance teachers of English for various companies and individuals.

I anticipated that after evaluating the responses I would be able to tell which type of school seems to pay more attention to using creative writing. However, the responses are balanced and the sample size is rather small so it is not possible to determine the type of institution which would be likely to use or pay attention to using creative writing activities more than the others. It would also be difficult to compare the particular sub-groups, based on this small-scale questionnaire survey.

Graph 2: Question 28.



8.1.3 Age Group of the Students

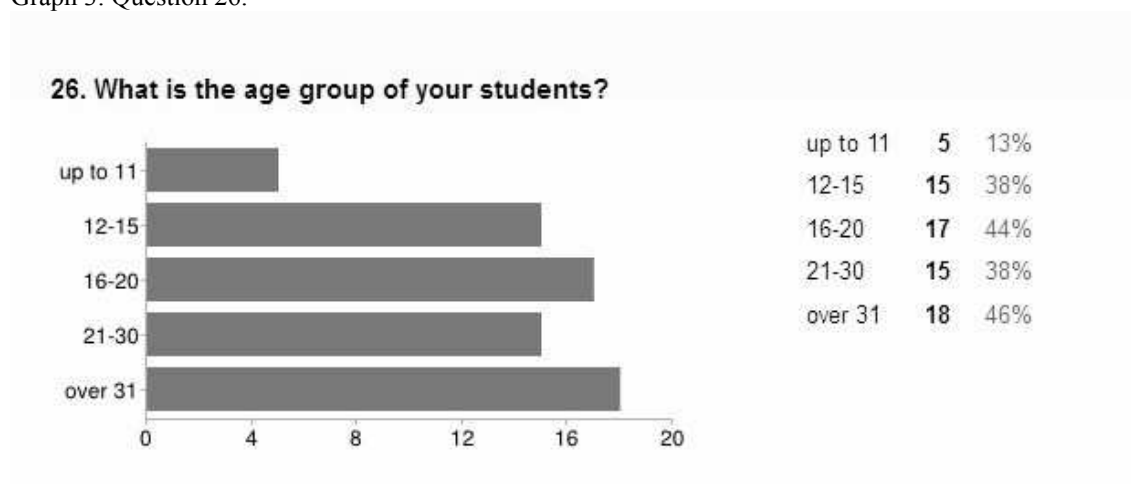
(Question 26)

By finding out the age group of the students I anticipated that I would be able to roughly guess the level of the students of the teachers who took part in the research as well as the probability of using creative writing to develop the language skills in these groups.

From the survey I learnt that 21 teachers (54%) work with students from several age groups. Most often – 59% of them stated that they teach adult students (23 teachers out of 39 teach students aged 21 and older) besides other age groups. On the other hand, only 9 teachers (23%) stated that they teach the age-groups corresponding to the primary school (up to 15 years) only. Five teachers then stated that they teach children up to 11 years (13%). Several teachers who work in grammar and secondary schools teach also adult learners, probably as private tutors or freelance teachers.

Taking the numbers into consideration, I think that creative writing activities could be used by the majority of the teachers as many of them teach students aged 15 and more. Their students could take advantage of the activities as well as benefit from them, independent at their language levels. I expect them to be pre-intermediate – advanced learners who could practise various aspects of language – from lexis to sentence structure.

Graph 3: Question 26.

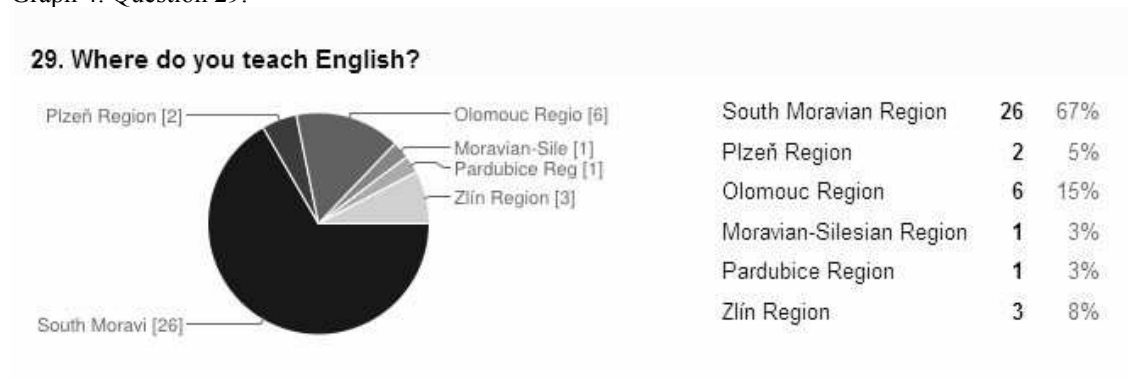


8.1.4 Regions where the Participants of the Survey Teach English (Question 29)

Despite I addressed teachers of English from various regions in the Czech Republic, 67% of those who filled in the questionnaire (26 teachers) stated that they work in South Moravian Region, with 19 of them specifying the place as Brno. The remaining 7 respondents (teaching somewhere in South Moravian region) did not specify the particular district. Apart from the teachers from South Moravian Region, also 3 teachers (8%) from Zlín Region, 6 teachers (15%) from Olomouc Region, 2 teachers (5%) from Plzeň Region, 1 teacher (3%) from Pardubice Region and 1 teacher (3%) from Moravian-Silesian Region took part in the survey.

Even though I tried to address teachers from various regions across the country, thanks to the snowball method of sampling, the majority of the teachers who took part in the survey were from South Moravian Region. Data from some regions are thus missing.

Graph 4: Question 29.



8.1.5 Experience in Teaching English

(Question 30)

I asked the respondents to state how long they have been teaching English in order to find out the average teaching experience of the sample group. The respondents proved to be rather young group with the average of 5.22 years of experience. The most experienced respondent has been teaching English for 20 years, while the least experienced teachers have been teaching English for 1 year only. Six teachers (15%) have been teaching English for 10-20 years, 11 teachers (28%) have been teaching English for 5-9 years and 22 teachers (57%) have been teaching English for up to 4 years. In the graph below I provide the number of teachers and the length of their experience in teaching English expressed in years.

Graph 5: Question 30.



8.1.6 Summary

By analyzing the data which the respondents provided about themselves and their experience with teaching English I assume that majority of the teachers are rather young and at the beginning of their teaching careers. I believe that this might be the reason why they took part in the survey, because they might be interested in various approaches to teaching English which can enrich their teaching portfolio.

I addressed many experienced teachers from various schools and regions, however, they decided not to take part in the survey. For this reason I assume that they might not use creative writing in teaching English or they might feel they do not have anything to share concerning the topic.

8.2 Views on the Importance of Language Skills

In the theoretical part I paid attention to language skills and their importance (see chapter 1.1). As I have already mentioned, all four language skills should be seen as equally important. For this reason I (intentionally) included this question to the survey, to find out whether teachers really see all four language skills as equal or if they see some of them more important. At the same time I wanted to find out whether the teachers consider creative writing as an activity suitable for developing language skills of their students or not. Last but not least, I asked the teachers to state the language skills which they think might be developed the most by using creative writing. In the following subchapters I provide the results in detail as well as their analyses and graphs.

8.2.1 The Importance of Language Skills

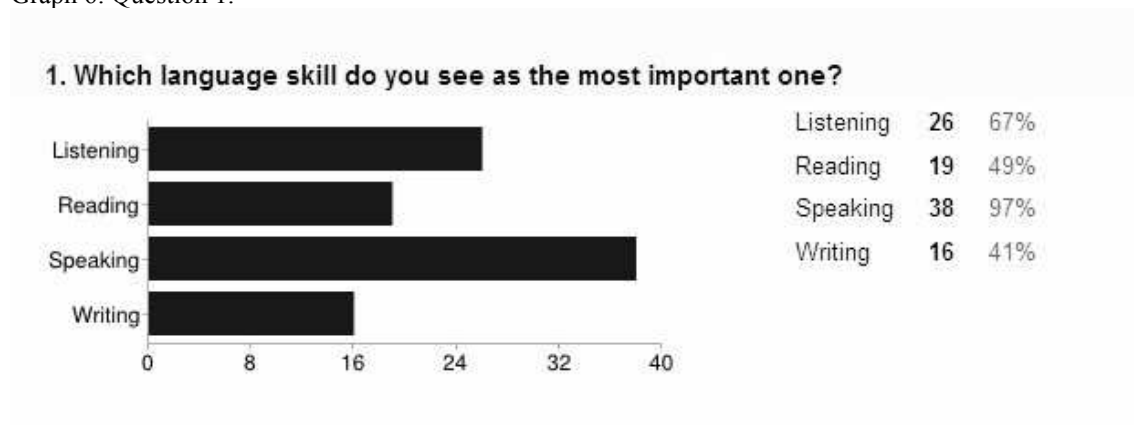
(Question 1)

From the opinions submitted in the questionnaire survey it is apparent that 97% of the teachers who took part in the research see **speaking skill** among the most important ones. Almost half of the respondents – 16 teachers (41%) stated **all four skills** as the most important – therefore equal. One third of the teachers (34%) checked only speaking as the most important skill, the combination of listening and speaking

was mentioned by 7 teachers (18%), listening together with reading and speaking was mentioned by 2 teachers (5%) and the combination of listening and reading was mentioned once (3%).

From the graph below where all the opinions of the teachers are put together, it is apparent that **writing** is seen as the **least important skill**, with only 41% of the respondents checking it. For me, this is actually quite alarming, especially when taking into consideration that a large part of our daily communication actually takes place in writing and to be able to communicate successfully, it is important to pay enough attention to writing as well as to other language skills. As Gareth Davies (2015) mentioned in his recent article called *The Writing Paradox* “the written word is becoming more and more important in terms of communication – emails, texts, tweets, Facebook updates, YouTube comments all require writing skills. Yet students don’t see a link between these and what they are doing in class.” From the results of this survey it seems that teachers do not pay enough attention to developing writing skills either.

Graph 6: Question 1.

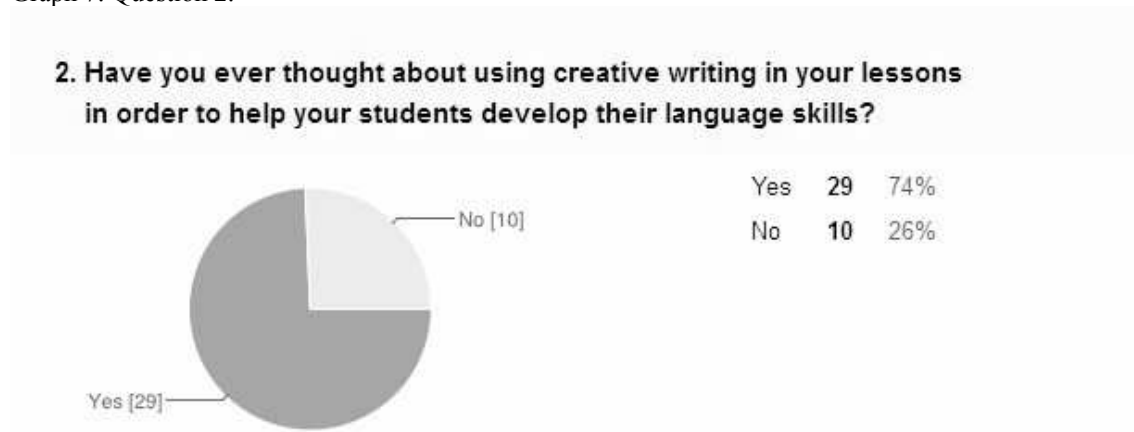


8.2.2 The Idea of Using Creative Writing in Respondents Lessons (Question 2)

Despite the fact that the teachers do not see writing as one of the most important language skills, the majority of them have already thought about using creative writing in their lessons. Even though they do not have to necessarily use it in their classes, they expressed that they are aware of this option. In the following graph you can see the results: 29 teachers (74%) agreed that they had thought about using creative writing in

their lessons, while 10 teachers (26%) have never considered it an option for developing their students' language skills. This finding also supports my presumption that teachers of English are aware of this option and its possibly beneficial character, but they consider it for example too time-consuming (see chapter 8.3.6) and thus not easy to use.

Graph 7: Question 2.



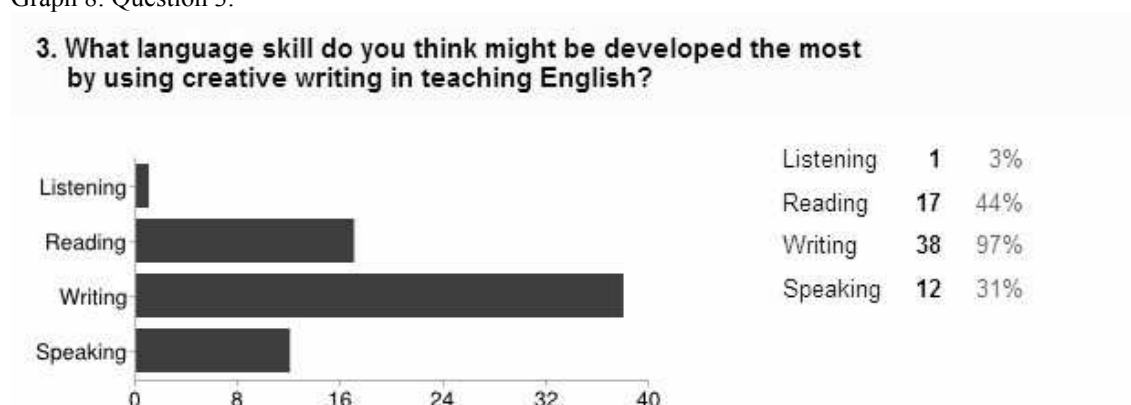
8.2.3 Views on Language Skill that Is Developed the Most by Using Creative Writing Activities (Question 3)

To explore further the importance of language skills and their development, I asked the teachers to state what language skills they think might be developed the most by using creative writing activities. The results were the following: 16 teachers (41%) stated that **writing** is the **only skill** that can be developed, 11 teachers (28%) believe that creative writing activities can be beneficial for developing **reading and writing skills**, 6 teachers (16%) stated speaking and writing, 1 teacher (3%) listed all of the skills, 4 (10%) teachers mentioned reading, writing and speaking, and 1 (3%) teacher stated reading and speaking with no mention of writing. In the graph below I present the overall results of the answers of this question. It is apparent that writing was mentioned in 97% of cases, with listening being mentioned only once (3%).

In this context I would like to once again mention the argument of A. Maley (2009) reminding us that “the development of aesthetic reading skills provides the learner with a better understanding of textual construction [which] feeds into their

writing”. Taking this into consideration, by using creative writing activities students can develop more language skills than writing. Apart from writing, reading and understanding of written texts can be practised as well as listening skills (i.e. if the teacher reads the outputs) and also speaking can be practised if there is a subsequent discussion of the texts in the classroom.

Graph 8: Question 3.



8.2.4 Summary

To sum up the findings in this area, I would like to pinpoint the fact that teachers as well as students (several teachers stated in the survey that their students want to focus on speaking in their lessons) tend to see writing as the least important language skill, despite the fact that in contemporary society people tend to use email service and social media (*Facebook, Twitter*, etc.) on a daily basis with a lot of ‘regular’ communication taking place there. The ability to be able to use the foreign language in all its forms is necessary and probably creative writing could be an enjoyable way of practising it – whether in a form of exchanging emails with pen-friends, writing short stories or poems. Despite the fact that teachers believe that mostly writing can be practised by using creative writing activities, its versatile character allows practising all language skills – either directly or indirectly (using follow-up activities).

Unfortunately, teachers tend to see creative writing as a too time-consuming activity which is too complicated to be used in the classroom (see chapter 8.3.6). Almost 75% of the teachers admitted that they considered using these activities, but for

some reason only a few of them use them regularly (which is according to Maley most useful).

8.3 Views and Beliefs about Creative Writing in Teaching English

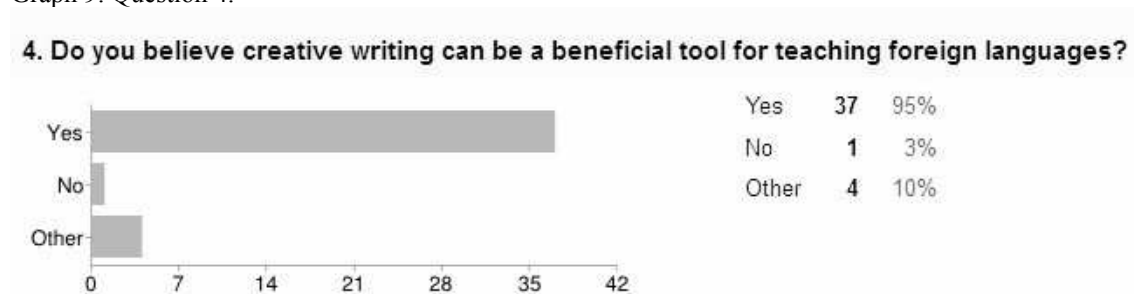
To learn about beliefs and general views about using creative writing activities in classrooms I used questions covering the following areas. Can it be a useful tool in teaching English? Who is it aimed at? When using regularly, can it help improve learners' language skills? What electronic tools might be used along with these activities? Have the teachers heard about any projects connected to creative writing? Last but not least, I was also interested in the fact whether there is anything in particular that teachers do not like about creative writing. I will provide the results in the following subchapters together with graphs and analyses. The summary will follow.

8.3.1 Views on Creative Writing as a Beneficial Tool

(Question 4)

According to the teachers who took part in my research, despite the fact that 26% of them have never thought about using creative writing in their own teaching, 37 of them (95%) believe that it can actually be a beneficial tool for teaching foreign languages. Only 1 teacher (3%) expressed a negative opinion. Four teachers also added their comments (listed as 'Other' in the graph) where they agreed with its beneficial character, however, noted that they do not believe in using it regularly or with slow students. One teacher also added that using creative writing activities might not be comfortable for students in their mother tongues and therefore they might not like it in English lessons.

Graph 9: Question 4.

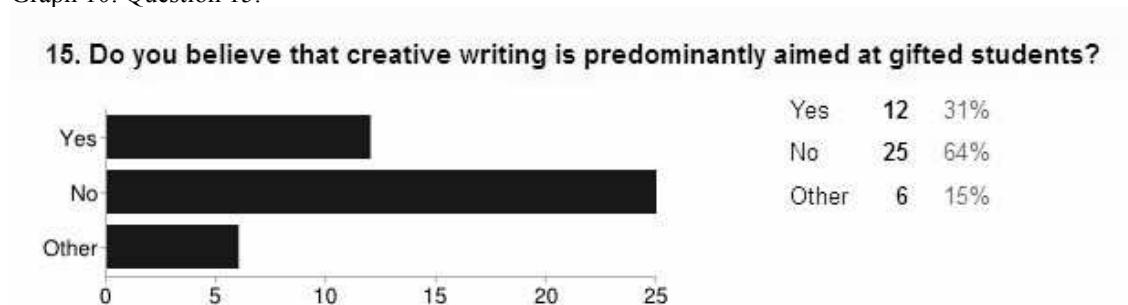


8.3.2 Views on the Importance of Being Talented

(Question 15)

When trying to find out the views and beliefs about creative writing, I needed to ask the teachers whether they see using creative writing as an activity suitable only for working with gifted students or for working with all students. As I had anticipated the majority of the teachers (25 of them – 64%) expressed their belief about creative writing being suitable for all students. Twelve teachers (31%) believe that creative writing activities are meant primarily for gifted students – those with well-developed writing skills and vivid imagination. Two of the respondents (5%) were not sure about their opinion, however, they remained positive stating: “I don’t know, but anyone can try.” The rest of the comments pinpointed that “all students can take part in. It is the teacher who knows the class and prepares exercises accordingly.” Even though one respondent stated that “it is definitely easier to use it with gifted students,” another one expressed belief stating the following: “I believe there are some techniques to enhance students in creative writing even if they are not gifted.” In my view, which is supported also by L. Mueller (1972), creative writing is suitable for all students because it allows them to express themselves, share their feelings and world-views as well as it leads them to self-knowledge and organize their thoughts. These are benefits that can prove useful especially to those students who might not see themselves as much gifted as their classmates.

Graph 10: Question 15.

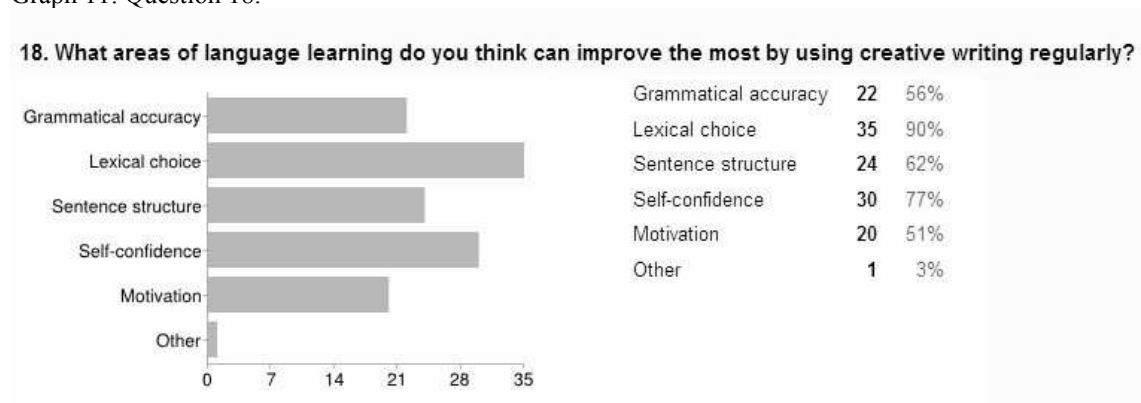


8.3.3 Areas of Language That Can Improve by Using Creative Writing Regularly (Question 18)

Based on the theoretical part of this thesis, I deliberately listed as options all of the areas that were discussed in chapter 2.3. In other words, all of the offered options are seen as the areas which can be improved by using creative writing activities regularly. The majority of the teachers (90%) stated that lexical choice can be improved along with self-confidence which was checked by 30 teachers (77%). Almost two thirds of the respondents (62%) is optimistic about improving sentence structure, and 22 of them (56%) believe that using these activities might help with grammatical accuracy. Interestingly, only 20 teachers (51%) see motivation as the area that could be improved.

This means that teachers when talking about creative writing benefits still do not realize its power as a versatile tool that can be used along the syllabus – or they do not feel confident about using creative writing activities themselves.

Graph 11: Question 18.



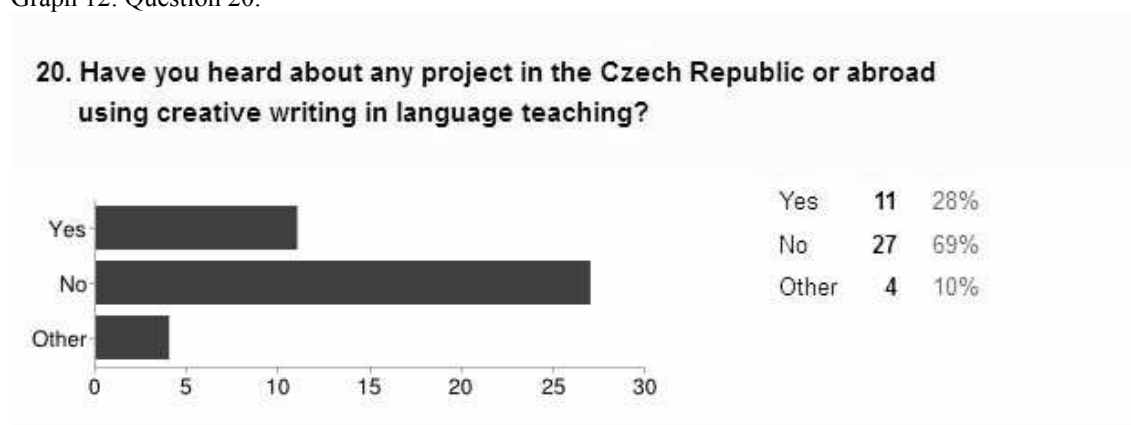
8.3.4 Awareness of Other Projects and Teachers using Creative Writing

(Questions 20, 21)

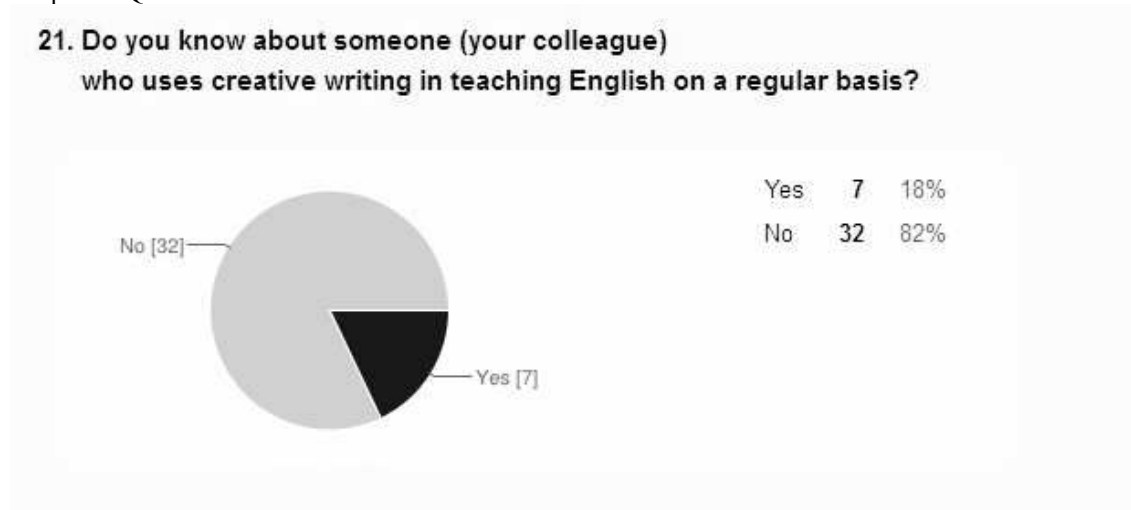
Mentioning the *First Story* project in the theoretical part, I wanted to find out to what extent the Czech teachers of English know about various projects worldwide. The majority – 27 teachers (69%) have never heard about any such project. Eleven respondents (28%) have come across a project connected to using creative writing in language teaching, and 4 teachers added a comment to their answer. They commented that they encountered some articles on ELT websites. One respondent also provided an example of using creative writing activities among translators in order to develop writing skills for translation of fiction and poetry. Unfortunately, the majority of the teachers did not provide any example of any particular project. This leads me to a conclusion that generally teachers in Czech schools might not be aware of the benefits of creative writing as they have not heard about any project yet.

When subsequently asked about any teachers who use creative writing in teaching English, 32 of them (82%) stated that they do not know anyone. Only 7 teachers (18%) know about someone who uses creative writing activities in teaching English on a regular basis. This also reflects the findings that Czech teachers of English probably do not have enough information about the issue and that they would use these activities if the issue was introduced to them (i.e. in their formal education).

Graph 12: Question 20.



Graph 13: Question 21.



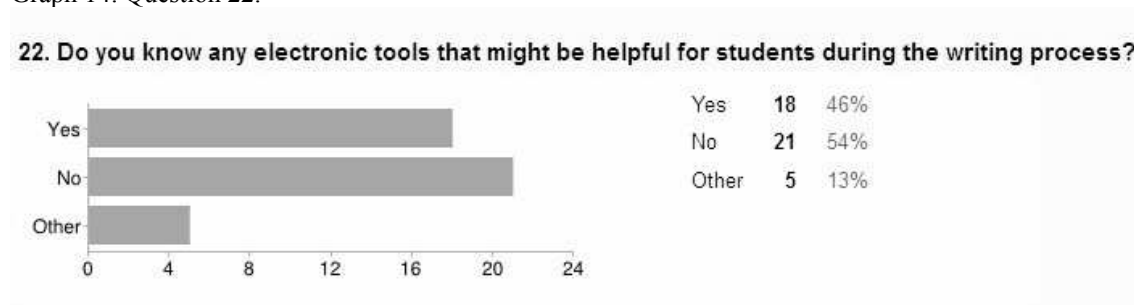
8.3.5 Electronic Tools

(Question 22)

Teachers were asked in the survey also about electronic tools which might be helpful during the writing process. I hoped to collect several useful resources that might be used by students for example when searching rhymes (rhymezone.com was mentioned several times), etc. The majority of the teachers (54%), however, state that they do not know any electronic tools that might help students with creative writing activities. Some of those who answered ‘Yes’ (5 teachers – 13%), provided also some examples of tools like *Facebook*, various chat rooms and blogs. One respondent also provided an example of a simplified corpora interface that might be useful (e.g. ske.li). Helpforenglish.cz was also mentioned in case students needed to consult grammar.

Taking into consideration what the teachers stated I assume that the lack of knowledge or possibly interest in using electronic tools (as well as the limited awareness of the issue) in teaching English to a large extent corresponds with the fact that teachers do not use creative writing activities in their teaching. Taking advantage of electronic tools can incredibly simplify the process – from sending homework via email to sharing the outcome on *Facebook* for correcting and commenting on the outcomes as well as providing feedback.

Graph 14: Question 22.



8.3.6 What Teachers Do Not Like About Creative Writing

(Question 23)

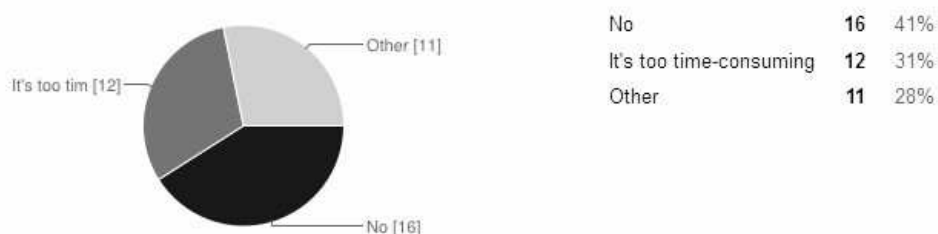
The last issue I was concerned with (in terms of finding out general beliefs about using creative writing in language teaching) was to find out whether there is anything in particular which teachers do not like about the idea of using creative writing activities. Sixteen teachers (41%) did not find anything that they would not like. On the other hand, 12 of them (31%) added that using creative activities is too time-consuming. Eleven teachers (28%) provided also other comments. Some of them expressed concern about creative writing being “disregarded by some students since not all of them like this kind of writing”, about creative writing being “too individual”. Against it, one teacher supported the idea of using creative writing in teaching English by stating that he or she does not like “the fact that anything creative is considered a waste of time!!!” and expressing his or her belief in changing the current educational system. On the other hand, some teachers do not like the whole idea, stating that their “students want to be able to communicate in English on daily basis and not write poems.” Some teachers also stated their lack of confidence in the area as well as pinpointed the importance of a positive relationship with the students. One of the comment also stated that “teachers and students confuse originality with creativity and that results in hunt for new, original, funny sentences”.

Both comments – positive and negative help explain the current situation in Czech schools and also support my expectations and presumptions. Thanks to the lack of information, teachers see using creative writing as a too time-consuming activity. The large number of the teachers who stated ‘No’ proves that they might be open to using creative writing activities if they were more informed about it and probably were

presented with successful examples from a real project or by someone experienced in using this tool.

Graph 15: Question 23.

23. Is there anything that you don't like about the idea of using creative writing in teaching English?



8.3.7 Summary

To sum up the general beliefs about using creative writing in teaching English, I would like to pinpoint the main issues – the teachers who took part in my research mostly see creative writing as a beneficial tool, despite the fact that they hardly use it themselves (see 8.4.1). The majority of them have not heard about any project using creative writing as well as 82% of them do not know any teacher using creative writing activities regularly. This might be the reason why they do not use the tool themselves, despite the fact that there was not any major issue stated that would prevent teachers from using the tool, apart from the fact that they tend to see it as too time-consuming.

Creative writing activities can however be adjusted to be used along the syllabus as well as they can be used as homework to save time. Electronic tools can also be helpful and its using can lead to teaching students to become independent in their learning.

Even though one third of the respondents believe that the activities should be aimed predominantly at gifted students, 64% of the teachers as well as several leading figures (see chapter 3.3, 1.4 and 8.3.2) supporting using creative writing in teaching foreign languages believe that all students can benefit.

Even though all of the areas that were mentioned in the survey can improve to a large extent (by using creative writing activities on a regular basis), the teachers mentioned them in the following order: the lexical choice, self-confidence, sentence structure, grammatical accuracy, and motivation. I believe that whatever their order is,

all of them can have a significant place in teaching and learning English and if creative writing activities have the power to help develop them, they are surely worth trying.

8.4 Teacher's Views on Using Creative Writing Activities in Classrooms

The main focus of the research was on the actual using of creative writing activities in teaching English in Czech schools. When creating the questions for this research area, I tried to reflect the ideas and issues presented in the theoretical part (see chapter 3). I paid attention to the idea of sharing writings with students which is important in terms of role-modelling, the frequency of using creative writing activities, sources of the activities, space for creative writing in lessons, ways of using it and its preferred form.

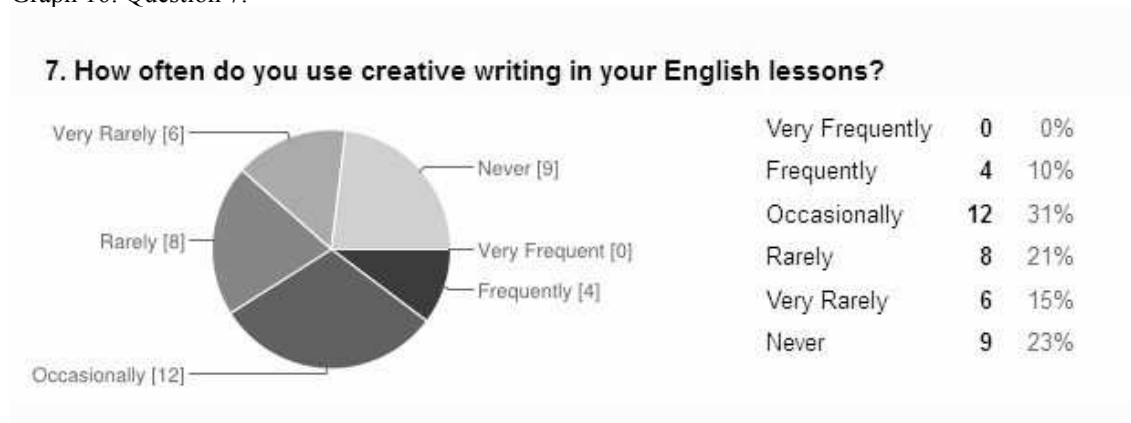
8.4.1 Frequency of Using Creative Writing Activities in Classrooms

(Question 7)

Do the teachers use creative writing in their lessons on a regular basis? It was one of my goals to find out the answer. In the questionnaire survey, only 4 teachers (10%) stated that they use it frequently. Twelve teachers (31%) admitted that they use creative writing activities occasionally, 8 teachers (21%) rarely, 6 of them (15%) very rarely and 9 teachers (23%) of all teachers stated that they never use creative writing activities in their English lessons.

Looking at the proportion of those who are more likely to use creative writing activities in teaching English and those who do not, the ratio is the following: 16 teachers (41%) use it from time to time, and 23 teachers (59%) do not use it at all or rarely. Alan Maley (2012) suggests using creative writing activities on a regular basis in order to take the full advantage of the tool. However, it is definitely better to exploit the activities from time to time than omit them completely. I expect that a large number of teachers who do not use these activities would use them if they had more information about it and heard about a real project.

Graph 16: Question 7.

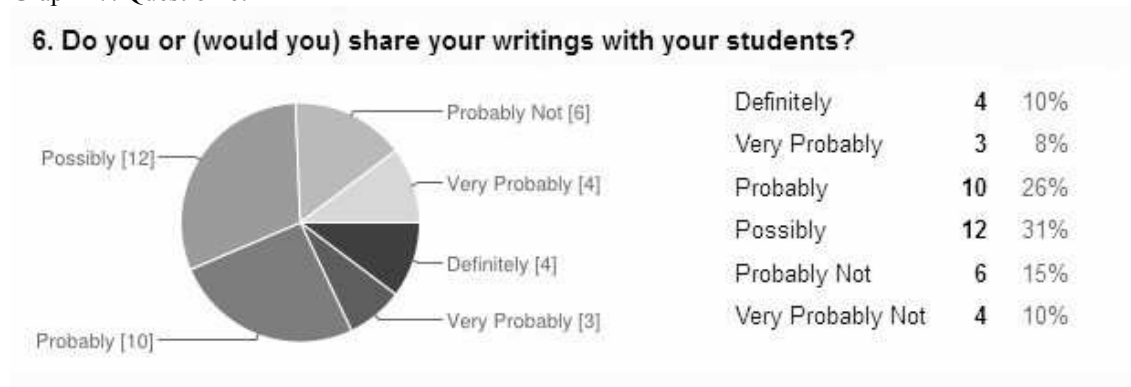


8.4.2 Sharing Writing with Students

(Question 6)

In order to motivate students and support their creative writing efforts, teachers should also take part in creative writing. I asked the teachers whether they share or would share their own writing with students. Only 4 teachers (10%) do not mind sharing their outcome with students. Three of them (8%) would very probably share it, 10 teachers (26%) see their sharing as probable and 12 teachers (31%) think about it as a possibility. The last 10 teachers (25%) do not like the idea of sharing their material with their students. This is probably because the teachers do not feel confident about creative writing themselves. According to Maley (2009), it is however important to take part in creative writing as teachers and thus serve as role-models (see chapter 3.1). Despite the teachers do not feel confident in their own writing, they still can encourage and lead the students.

Graph 17: Question 6.

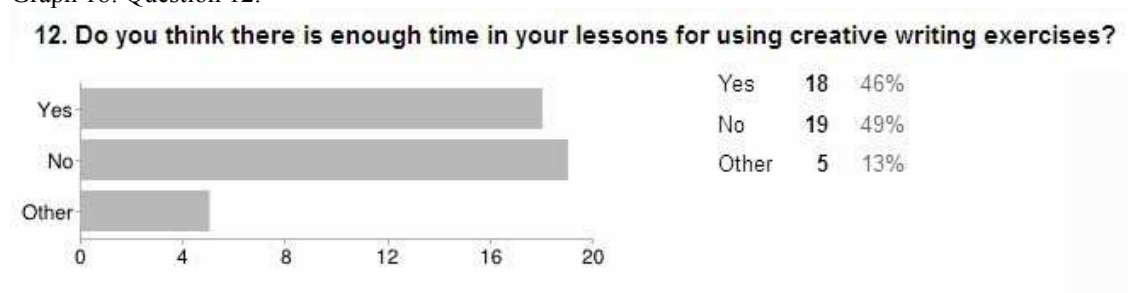


8.4.3 Time for Using Creative Writing in the Classroom

(Question 12)

Supporting the fact that 16 teachers (41%) use creative writing activities in their lessons from time to time (revealed in chapter 8.4.1), 18 of the respondents stated that there is enough time for these activities in their lessons. It seems that these teachers can find a little time occasionally to employ creative activities focused on developing language skills. The other half of the respondents – 19 teachers (49%) do not see any time left for creative writing activities, which also 5 teachers stated in their comments. However, they also noted that they are able to find some time for these activities (occasionally) if they plan ahead. This finding also supports my presumption that the teachers would be willing to use the tool if they were better informed about it.

Graph 18: Question 12.



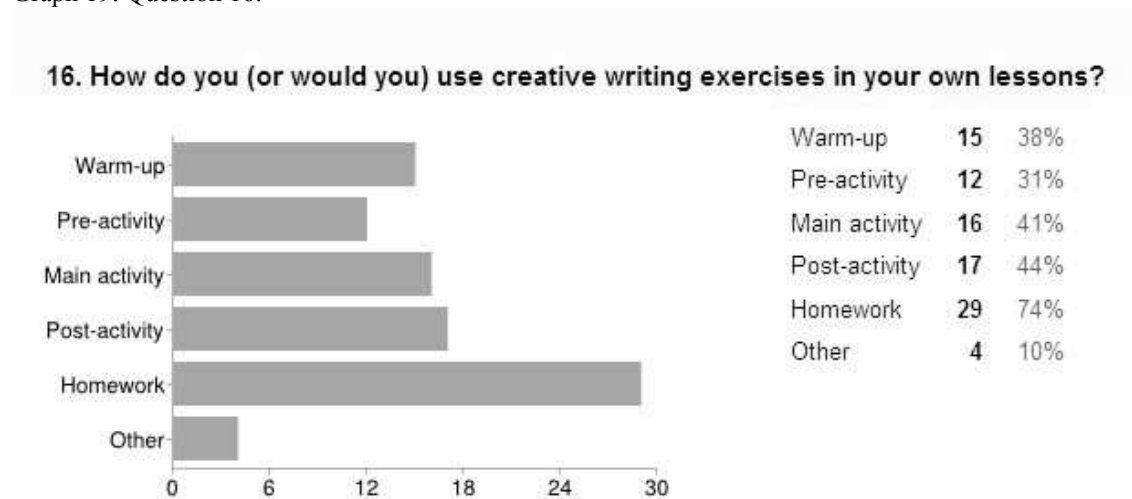
8.4.4 Ways of Using Creative Writing

(Question 16)

An interesting question – in terms of using creative writing in teaching English – is also finding out how teachers use (or would use) creative writing in their lessons. Respondents were allowed to check as many options as they needed. As I assumed, homework (74%) was the most frequent answer, next to post-activity (44%) and main-activity (41%). In only 7 cases teachers chose homework as the only option, the rest of the teachers specified that creative writing exercises could be used in all parts of the lesson, depending on the activity. At the same time, 10 teachers do not (or would not) use creative writing as homework, which is interesting. As creative writing is generally seen as a rather time-consuming activity, such a high number of those who do

not/would not use creative writing activities even as homework, is surprising. I assume that these teachers view subsequent evaluating of these activities as too time-consuming as well. If teachers set a goal of each activity beforehand, they can focus on evaluating only several aspects of the text, instead of all errors and thus save time. On the other hand, carefully planned activities do not have to be time-consuming, quite the contrary – they can be short and peer-assessed.

Graph 19: Question 16.



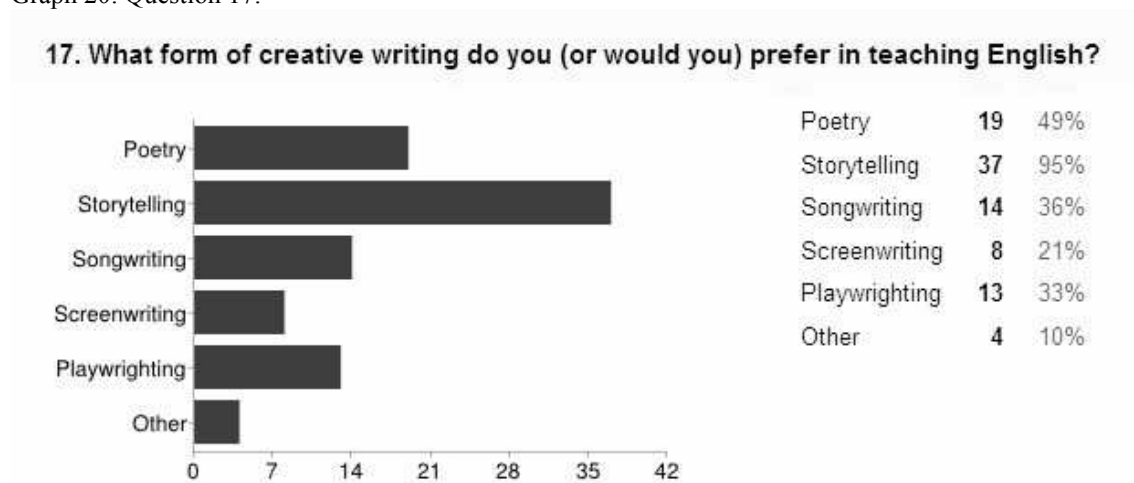
8.4.5 Preference of Form

(Question 17)

The form of creative writing activities was investigated by this question. I was especially concerned about the ratio between poetry and storytelling which as I expected was higher for storytelling. Writing poetry is contrary to its easy and short form rather neglected by contemporary teachers. The majority – 37 teachers (95%) checked storytelling as one of the preferred forms of creative writing, whereas poetry was checked by only 19 teachers (49%). Songwriting was chosen by 14 teachers (36%) and to my surprise also playwriting received 13 votes (33%). Even though I expected that screenwriting would not be supported to a great extent – only 8 teachers (21%) checked this option. I believe it can be a joyful activity – with the availability of various cameras and mobile devices it is not too complicated to bring the screenplay to life as well as the outcome of playwriting, which can be staged for either other students at school or for families and friends. Fortunately, also other options were mentioned by 4

teachers (10%) suggesting comic book writing, exchanging emails with pen friends, creative writing based on watching movies, paintings, photographs, writing inspired by music, writing inspired by imaginary situations and writing of fictional letters to fictional/famous people. There are numerous possibilities for writing creatively (see chapter 3.3) and generally the outcome depends only on the teacher and the particular group. I intentionally let the teachers provide their own options to add more activities, however, contrary to my expectations only 4 of them provided their own suggestions.

Graph 20: Question 17.



8.4.6 Sources of Creative Writing Activities

(Questions 10, 11)

Concerning the exercises, I expected that the most of the teachers would prefer creating their own activities as they would reflect the needs of their students. The majority of the teachers (74%) checked websites as the main source of creative writing exercises, with creating their own activities being the second most often checked option (69%). Various textbooks and ELT books were the least checked options with only 10 votes (26%) for textbooks and 8 (21%) for ELT books.

Most often (64%) the teachers checked the combination of their own activities and websites. Some of them also noted in the comments that they would ask their colleagues or adjust activities downloaded from websites.

I also asked the teachers to provide any sources that they would like to recommend to other teachers of English. The question was not marked as required, therefore only a few teachers provided their answer.

Some of the sources they recommended to their colleagues were the following (for URLs of the following websites see Appendix 2):

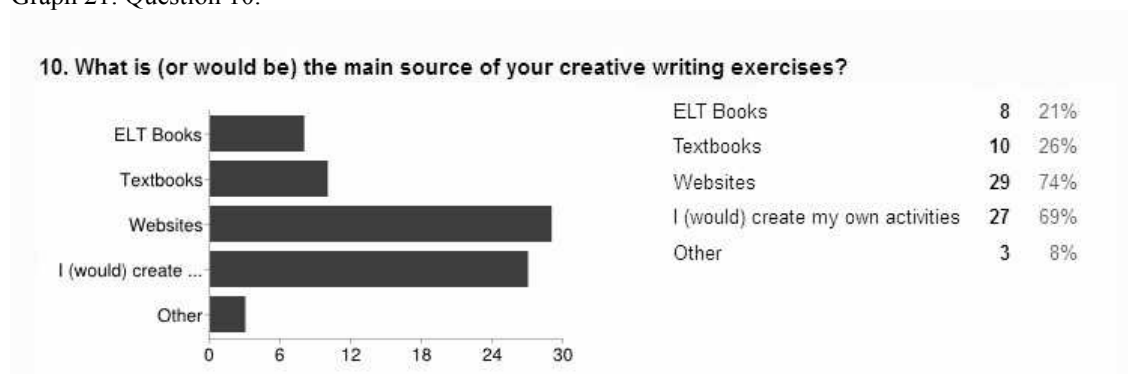
- Random Plot Generator (for shorter texts)
- Plot Generator (for longer texts)

(The commentary with the suggestions was the following: “The websites create nonsensical sentences and my students can play with them and they love it”.)

Another teacher shared the address to a website which he or she uses to create activities related to poetry writing – Lovereading 4 Kids.

All the sources suggested by teachers who took part in the survey are listed in Appendix 2.

Graph 21: Question 10.



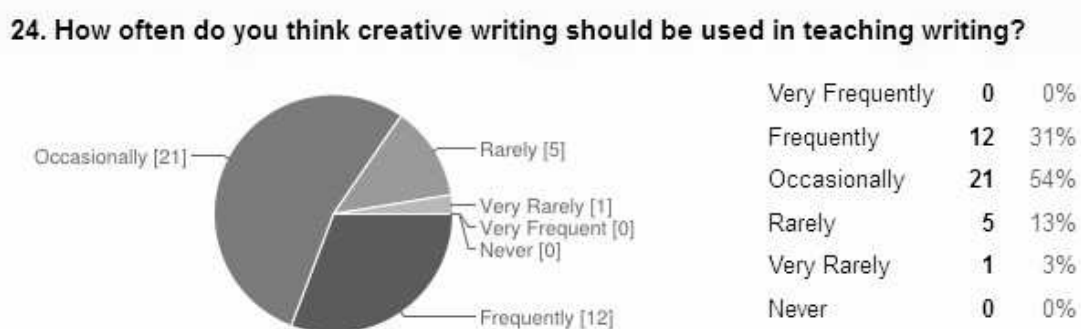
8.4.7 Ideal Frequency of Using Creative Writing and Immediate Start

(Questions 24, 25)

I was also interested in ideal frequency of using creative writing, as suggested by the teachers of English. None of the teachers believe that creative writing activities should be used very frequently, which I assume reflects that fact that many of them stated that the activities are time consuming and in half of the cases there is not enough time in their lessons for such activities. However, despite the fact that 9 of them (23%) stated that they never use creative writing activities (and other 6 teachers (15%) use it very rarely and 8 (21%) rarely), nobody checked the option that it should never be used

in English lessons. This supports also the above mentioned view of the teachers that almost all of them believe that creative writing is beneficial in teaching foreign languages (see 8.3.1). I would also like to point out the fact that teachers are not used to employing these activities themselves, as they are afraid of planning lessons with them because of their possible time-consuming character. In fact, it is probable that if creative writing activities were more incorporated and emphasized in their teacher training, teachers might become more familiar with various sources and feel more comfortable and self-confident to use them with their students to practise their language skills.

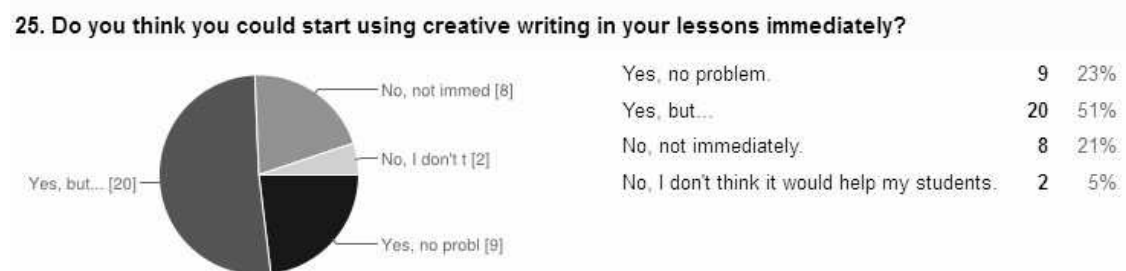
Graph 22: Question 24.



Hand in hand with teachers' self-confidence goes the answer to the question whether they feel comfortable with the topic to the extent that they could start using creative writing activities in teaching English immediately. Only 9 of the teachers (23%) stated that they do not have any problems with using creative writing activities immediately. The majority – 20 teachers (51%) think that there is something that they would have to do, learn or consult before they would start using them in their lessons. Eight teachers (21%) can not start immediately and surprisingly 2 teachers (5%) do not think that creative writing activities would not help his or her students.

Again, I see this view as the result of lacking information about creative writing and its benefits as well as unawareness of sources and exercises created by professionals provided with their notes on using the exercises. In this case Jane Spiro's books (2004, 2007) can be recommended. Both of them are listed in the Works Cited at the end of the thesis and can serve as great reference books.

Graph 23: Question 25.



8.4.8 Summary

Summing it up, the findings in this part of the research show that the teachers would be willing to use creative writing activities in their lessons, but again it seems that they would need a proper introduction. Sixteen teachers (41%) use creative writing activities from time to time and 23 teachers (59%) do not use it at all or rarely.

Concerning sharing the teacher's writing with students, teachers do not seem to be willing to share their materials. However, as Maley (2009) proposes, "the power of the teacher as model, and as co-writer is inestimable". The more the teacher writes and shares with students, the better connection might be created between them, and the better outcome it can bring in terms of practising English.

Surprisingly, 18 teachers revealed that there is some time in their lessons for using creative writing activities and some others also noted that if they plan carefully, they can also find some time which is optimistic. This finding also supports my presumption that the teachers would be willing to use the tool if they were better informed about the issue and knew the right sources.

The majority of the teachers (74%) also prefer using creative writing as homework, however, many of them do not see it a problem to use the activities also as a pre-task, main task or a post-task.

As for the form preference, storytelling seems to be most popular, with poetry having only 49% of votes. Screenwriting was on the other hand mentioned by only 8 teachers, despite the fact that students could take advantage of their mobile devices and cameras and transform their screenplays into short videos. I also hoped that teachers would provide more alternatives to the suggested forms of writing. However, apart from only a few of them, they did not provide any. This leads me to a conclusion that the

teachers do not use any or only a few activities in their lessons employing electronic tools and various modern technologies to liven up the classroom.

The majority of the teachers admitted (74%) that they use (or would use) websites as their main source of activities and 69% of them also stated that they prefer using their own activities. Consulting ELT books was unfortunately mentioned only by 26% of the respondents which is surprising because there are so many useful books and resources available in libraries and on the Internet and in many cases they are not even expensive. I would definitely recommend using the ELT books as a part of teachers' professional development.

Only 9 (23%) teachers out of 39 are self-confident enough to begin using creative writing activities in their lessons immediately, another 20 (51%) of them feel that they could begin immediately, but there is something that they would need to do or learn beforehand.

As the ideal frequency of using the tool, they believe that it should be used frequently to occasionally. Surprisingly, nobody checked the option 'Never' which means that teachers believe in it and again it is possible that if they were introduced to the tool formally with the materials and real-life examples that they would be more confident to use it themselves in their lessons.

8.5 Views on Possible Obstacles

In order my research to be complete it is inevitable to pay attention also to possible obstacles that might occur while using creative writing activities in teaching English. To uncover and describe them I asked the teachers who use the tool to state whether they encountered any problems. I was also interested in what teachers see as a possible weakness on their side, whether they see creative writing as a rather positive or negative tool and whether they see themselves as competent enough for using this tool.

8.5.1 What Prevents Teachers from Using Creative Writing Activities

(Questions 8, 9)

The questions used in this section were not required. Therefore I do not provide any graphs at the end of this section. Instead, I present the questions as they were asked in the survey.

Question 8. **If you answered very rarely or never, is there anything in particular that prevents you from using it?**

Question 9. **If you answered very frequently - occasionally, have you encountered any negative responses or problems with your students?**

Once I asked the teachers about how often they use creative writing in their lessons, I also wanted to find out whether there is something in particular that prevents them from using it – in case they answered very rarely or never, as well as I tried to find out whether those who use creative writing exercises very frequently to occasionally encountered any negative responses or problems with their students.

From the answers they provided I learnt the following: those who answered very rarely or never do not generally seem to have any problems with creative writing activities. As the reason why they do not use these activities they see the fact that they have not heard about creative writing in teaching English yet, and that they would be keen on trying it if they had any useful materials. They also stated that they would be interested in some useful materials from their colleagues. Two teachers also stated that their students are interested in learning listening and speaking, not reading and writing. One of the respondents answered that “The goal being communicative competence, there was little reason to use creative writing.” On the other hand, one teacher stated that instead of using it in lessons, students are asked to write creatively at home and send the outcome by email.

Another widely believed fact is that the teachers assume that using creative writing activities is not effective with adult learners as they are likely to consider these activities embarrassing and useless. One teacher even stated that students ignore creative writing and prefer traditional classroom arrangement. Five teachers believe that

their students are too young for using creative writing (primary school learners) and 4 teachers provide as the reason the time-consuming character of creative writing.

All of the issues that were mentioned by the teachers were discussed in the theoretical part (see chapter 2.2) where I explained that with careful planning and the right activities creative writing can be a beneficial tool, which can be used even with the youngest ones – for example using activities focused predominantly on rhyming of lexical items and using basic sentence structure, practising affirmatives and negatives, etc.

Concerning the second question – aimed at those who use creative writing in their lessons at least from time to time – I tried to find out whether they encountered any problems. Six teachers encountered any problem with students in terms of using creative writing, however, despite they could provide more details they did not do so. Only one teacher admitted that he or she encountered a problem with adults, but despite the “adult learners are initially sceptical [about using creative writing activities] they seem to have fun in the end.”

Based on the above mentioned answers, I assume that the problem with creative writing is not its wrongly-believed time consuming character, but rather the fact that teachers are not informed enough about it and that they do not know about any useful materials. They also mostly do not know any colleague using creative writing on a regular basis and thus they do not know anyone they could consult the issue with.

8.5.2 Competence to Using Creative Writing

(Question 14)

Going further, I asked the teachers whether they feel competent enough to use creative writing activities in their lessons. Only 2 of them (5%) do not believe they can use it in classrooms, 9 of them (23%) feel very little competent and only 7 teachers (18%) feel competent to a great extent. More than half of the respondents – 21 teachers (54%) feel somewhat competent which is positive. I believe that when the teachers pay more attention to the issue, they could take advantage of using creative writing also in their lessons and that it might prove to be a helpful tool in developing their students' language skills.

Graph 24: Question 14.

14. Do you feel competent to use creative writing in your English lessons?



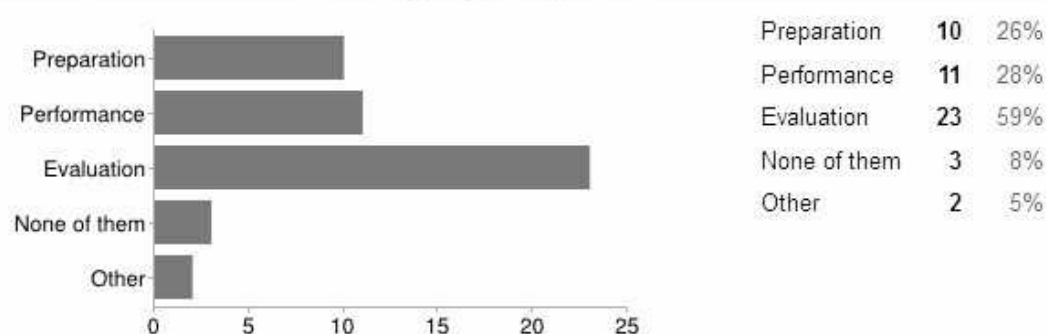
8.5.3 Teachers' Weaknesses

(Question 19)

Once the teachers begin using creative writing in their lessons, they may discover that some part of the process might be a rather complicated for them. For this reason I asked them to state their possible weakness in the process of using creative writing in their lessons. The majority of the respondents – 23 teachers (59%) do not feel confident in terms of **evaluation** of the outcome. Ten teachers (26%) see their weakness in the preparation of the activities, which I assume is directly connected to the fact that the teachers are unaware of useful materials and their sources. Eleven teachers (28%) are concerned about the performance of the activities which I believe is connected to the fact that they can not imagine using the activities with younger learners or slow learners yet. As they do not have enough materials to use, they might be slightly prejudiced as well as they might fear their own performance. However, I believe that using creative writing activities in English lessons can enrich both the students as well as the teacher in social level as well as in practising their language skills.

Graph 25: Question 19.

19. What area of creative writing might be your weakness?



8.5.4 Summary

Trying to find various obstacles and issues that might prevent teachers from using creative writing activities in their lessons, I discovered that the problems are predominantly the following: teachers have not heard about using creative writing in teaching English yet, they would be keen on trying it if they were aware of any useful materials, and they also stated that they would be interested in some useful materials from their colleagues. Two teachers also stated that their students are interested in learning listening and speaking skills, not reading and writing. Generally, these problems reflect my presumptions and can easily be solved if the teachers decided to explore the possibilities that creative writing offers.

Unfortunately, six teachers who stated that they encountered any problem with students in terms of using creative writing did not provide further details. One teacher also admitted that he or she encountered a problem with adults, but despite the adult learners were initially sceptical they enjoyed it subsequently. This finding proves that creative activities can be used with learners at all language levels.

In the question asking whether teachers feel competent to use creative writing activities in their lessons, 54% of the respondents checked the option ‘Somewhat’ which again is positive. The major problem in terms of teachers’ weaknesses seems to be evaluation of the texts that students create – which stated 59% of the teachers. When evaluating the outcomes according to Jane Spiro, even this problem does not have to be an obstacle. She suggests to create specific goals and subsequently evaluate the writing accordingly, not marking all the mistakes (see chapter 3.8).

Taking into consideration all the obstacles revealed by the research, most of them can be overcome easily by consulting the right materials.

8.6 Teacher’s Experience with Creative Writing as Learners of English

Because teacher’s own experience and creative personality can influence his or her attitude to using creative writing activities, I asked them whether they write creatively themselves and whether they experienced using these activities during their own studies.

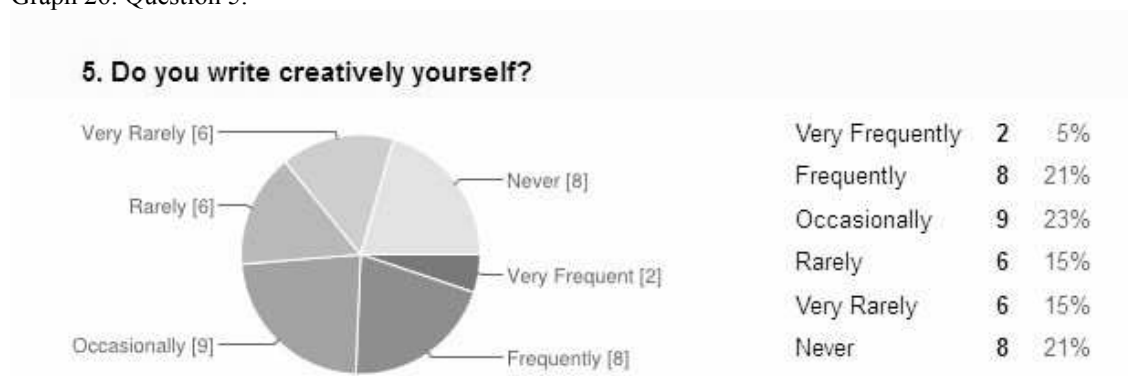
8.6.1 Teachers and Their Own Creative Writing

(Question 5)

Surprisingly, many teachers revealed that they do write creatively themselves. Only 2 of them (5%) write very frequently, 8 teachers (21%) write frequently and 9 teachers write occasionally, which means that 19 teachers (49%) write creatively quite regularly. On the other hand, 6 teachers (15%) write rarely, another 6 teachers (15%) very rarely and only 8 teachers (21%) do not write creatively at all.

These findings are very positive in terms of the teachers' creativity and their willingness (and possibly also a need) to express themselves in a creative way. The more the teachers write creatively themselves, the more likely they are to employ these activities to their own teaching.

Graph 26: Question 5.



8.6.2 Experience During Their Studies

(Question 13)

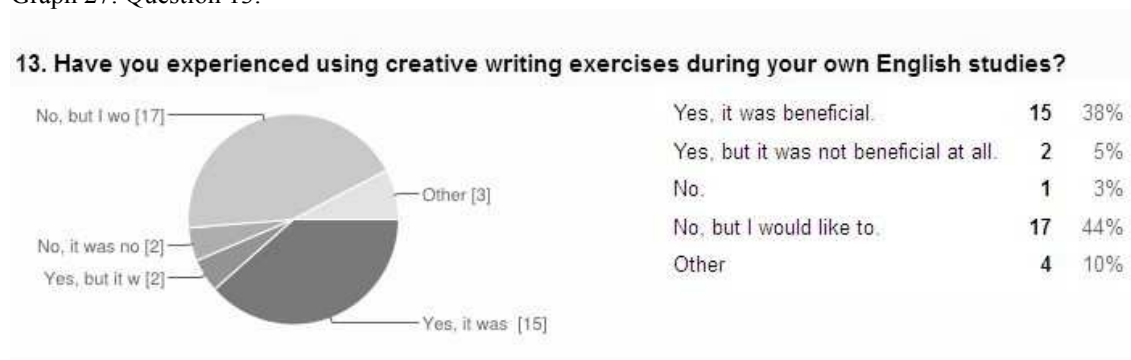
Even though I did not expect that the majority of the teachers had experienced using creative writing in their lessons during their studies, I found it important to shed light on the issue. Their previous positive or negative experience may have direct impact on their beliefs about creative writing and their effort to use it in their own teaching.

The survey showed that 15 teachers (38%) experienced creative writing activities in their studies and they see it as beneficial. Only 2 teachers (5%) who experienced it do not believe it was beneficial for them. Only 1 teacher does not have

any experience with using creative writing exercises and do not miss the opportunity. Nearly half of the respondents – 17 teachers (44%) did not experience creative writing activities during their studies, however they would have liked to. Four teachers (10%) commented that they are not sure about it or do not remember exactly.

Again, this finding is rather positive as the majority of the teachers did not express any negative beliefs. On the contrary, their opinions about creative writing activities being beneficial during their studies or their wish to experience them themselves supports their positive view on using creative writing as a tool for developing writing skills.

Graph 27: Question 13.



8.6.3 Summary

As really positive information concerning the teachers' experience with using creative writing activities themselves I see the fact that the majority of them create something on their own from time to time. It is quite demanding to find time to write creatively so I appreciate that the teachers write at least sometimes and irregularly.

Some of the teachers also experienced creative writing activities during their studies (38%) and they found it beneficial which I also see as important for their future use of the activities. Almost half of them (44%) did not experienced using the tool as students, however, they would have liked to. This is a rather optimistic finding which shows that despite the fact that the teachers do not use creative writing activities in their teaching – whatever the reason – they see it as a beneficial tool and I believe they would use it in their lessons if they learnt more about it.

Summary of the Practical Part

In the practical part of the thesis I provided a questionnaire survey which I spread among teachers of English using the snowball method of sampling. The sample group provided me with material which I later analysed. As I have expected, I found out that despite being used to some extent by several teachers, using creative writing as a tool in teaching English still does not have enough attention as it would deserve, especially considering its benefits it may bring to developing language skills.

Conclusion

Creative writing is a versatile tool that can help students with developing language skills on all language levels. Writing creatively can lead to an independent language use on the side of students as well as it allows them to think deeply about situations that they would normally take for granted, re-think them, change them or re-live them. Exploiting some aspects of creative writing can broaden students' as well as teachers' horizons, foster their artistic expression, entertain them and help students find their identity. With its artistic value, it can also bring amusement and enjoyment into the classroom and still be used easily along the syllabus.

In this thesis I explored the potential of using it in classrooms in order to develop students' English language skills as well as I described the issue and explained its possible contribution as a tool for teaching and learning English. I also carried out a research based on a questionnaire survey among teachers of English to find out what their attitudes towards using creative writing exercises in their lessons are, whether they see creative writing as a tool with a positive effect on developing their students' language skills and how frequently they use it in their teaching practice.

In the theoretical part, I described the theoretical background of creative writing as a tool for teaching English. I paid attention to language skills, creative writing and motivation, theoretical as well as practical aspects of using creative writing in teaching English. The practical part was subsequently focused on the actual research based on an online questionnaire survey performed among teachers of English.

To be able to answer my research questions, I collected data by using the snowball method of sampling. I addressed several teachers of English via email and social media and asked them to spread the link to the form to other teachers of English, teaching in the Czech Republic. The subsequent analysis of the collected data was done in six research areas.

Analysis of the area focused on geographical and background data helped me to describe the participants. The participants of the survey are primarily from language schools, teaching in South Moravian region, their average experience is about five years and their qualification is predominantly Master's degree in teaching English.

The analysis of the area focused on views on the importance of language skills showed that writing is seen among the teachers who took the survey as the least important skill. The majority of the teachers had thought about using the tool in their

lessons before, but unfortunately for various reasons they have not used it yet. It also showed that the teachers often believe that creative writing activities can help with practising writing only. However, the activities can be used for practising all skills if prepared accordingly.

The views and beliefs about creative writing in teaching English proved to be rather positive. The teachers mostly see creative writing as a beneficial tool, despite the fact that they hardly use the tool themselves. The majority of them have not heard about any project using creative writing yet as well as most of them do not know any other teacher using creative writing activities on a regular basis. It was in this research area where it was proved that the teachers tend to see the tool as too time-consuming. Creative writing activities can however be adjusted to be used along the syllabus as well as they can be used as homework to save time. Electronic tools can also be helpful and using them can lead to teaching students to become more independent in their learning. The majority of the teachers also expressed their belief that creative writing activities are not aimed at gifted students only, which is positive.

Concerning the views on using creative writing activities in classrooms, the research proved that the teachers would be willing to use creative writing activities in their lessons, but they would need a proper formal introduction. In terms of sharing the teachers' creative writing with their students, teachers are not willing to share their outcome, which is rather negative as the power of role-modelling is in this case very important. The teachers also admit to have enough time for using the activities, especially if they plan ahead, which also supports my presumption that the teachers would be willing to use the tool if they were better informed about it and knew the right resources. The majority of the teachers also prefer using creative writing as homework, however, many of them do not see it a problem to use the activities also as a pre-task, main task or a post-task. Concerning the form preference – storytelling was the most checked option. As the source of activities the teachers choose websites or they prefer to create their own ones. Only a few teachers are self-confident enough to begin using creative writing activities in their lessons immediately, another half of them feel that they could begin immediately, but there is something that they would need to do or learn beforehand. As the ideal frequency of using the tool they believe is using it frequently to occasionally.

Trying to find out various possible obstacles, I discovered that instead of pinpointing the problems themselves, the teachers agreed on having only a little

experience and lacking information concerning the resources. Generally, these problems reflect my presumptions and can easily be solved if the teachers decided to explore the possibilities offered by creative writing. As their main weakness in connection with using the tool the teachers see evaluation. What is rather positive is the fact that they mostly feel somewhat competent to use the tool. Taking into consideration all the obstacles revealed by the research, most of them can be overcome easily by consulting the right materials.

Teachers' own experience with using the tool as learners of English is also positive, one third of the teachers experienced using the tool during their studies and they found it beneficial. Many of the teachers had not experienced it during their studies, but they would have liked to. The majority of the teachers also write creatively themselves (even though only irregularly and from time to time) which is positive.

Taking into consideration all these findings, all my presumptions were proved. Teachers in Czech schools are aware of the fact that creative writing might be beneficial for the development of their students' language skills. However they believe they do not have enough time to exploit the tool themselves with their own students and thus use it rarely. They are not aware of available literature concerning creative writing activities that can be easily obtained from the Internet and book stores but they would be willing to use creative writing as a tool for teaching English if the issue was introduced to them beforehand.

Because of being limited by the scope of the thesis, I could not pay attention to all of the interesting topics and issues which creative writing as a tool for teaching English offers for investigation. I believe that the topic will be further explored in the future, as it gradually receives more and more attention among teachers of English and educators worldwide. A long-term research paying attention to a particular group of students and their development might be an interesting area to explore as well as further investigation of each of the subchapters discussed in the theoretical part might bring interesting results.

I believe the discussion of using creative writing as a tool for teaching English as a foreign language as well as the questionnaire survey raised awareness of the issue at least among those who took part in the research and that the teachers will possibly try to find information about the tool on their own and try using some of the activities in their lessons in order to help their students develop language skills as well as raise their motivation and self-esteem.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Several websites which can be useful for teachers who are interested in using creative writing as a tool for teaching English language.

FREE Rhyming Dictionary - Find Rhyming Words in Seconds. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.rhymer.com/index.html/>

OneLook Reverse Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.onelook.com/reverse-dictionary.shtml>

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Appendix 2

Useful sources suggested by the teachers of English who took part in the questionnaire survey.

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Appendix 3

The complete online form that I created using *Google Forms*, in order to find out answers to my research questions. I distributed it to the teachers of English using the snowball method.



CREATIVE WRITING as a tool in TEACHING ENGLISH

Dear teachers of English,

Welcome to a questionnaire survey designed to collect data for my diploma thesis project. As a student of Masaryk University in Brno, I'm doing research in using Creative Writing as a Tool in Teaching English. This topic has recently been discussed all over the world and the idea inspired various projects in the UK as well as in the US and Asia.

I have created this form in order to find out whether teachers of English in the Czech surroundings use creative writing as a tool for developing learners' language skills:

As using creative writing I understand using various creative activities such as writing poems, short stories, song lyrics, etc. in order to practise learners' language skills. The aim of these activities is to provide learners enough space to express themselves freely, as well as raise their motivation, creativity and imagination. Learners are not expected to write their texts without mistakes. They are encouraged to express their ideas in a playful and creative way and to share their emotions and feelings through their texts. They also practise their language skills and use the language naturally.

I would like to ask you to fill in the following form and help me to find out to what extent teachers of English use creative writing exercises in their teaching and what are their attitudes to it. The form should take you about 10 minutes to complete.

At the same time, I would like to ask you to share this questionnaire with other teachers of English in order to reach as many teachers as possible.

The questionnaire is anonymous and will serve only for the purposes of my diploma thesis project. Your participation is highly appreciated and will provide important input.

Thank you for your time.

* Required

1. Which language skill do you see as the most important one? *

Please, check one or more options.

- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Writing

2. Have you ever thought about using creative writing in your lessons in order to help your students develop their language skills? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. What language skill do you think might be developed the most by using creative writing in teaching English? *

You can check one or more options.

- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Speaking

4. Do you believe creative writing can be a beneficial tool for teaching foreign languages? *

Please state 'yes' or 'no'. Feel free to check also the 'Other' option to specify your answer or add your comment.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other:

5. Do you write creatively yourself? *

☐ Very Frequently

☐ Frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Very Rarely

☐ Never

6. Do you or (would you) share your writings with your students? *

☐ Definitely

☐ Very Probably

☐ Probably

☐ Possibly

☐ Probably Not

☐ Very Probably Not

7. How often do you use creative writing in your English lessons? *

☐ Very Frequently

☐ Frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Very Rarely

☐ Never

8. If you answered VERY RARELY or NEVER, is there anything in particular that prevents you from using it?

Please specify.

9. If you answered VERY FREQUENTLY – OCCASIONALLY, have you encountered any negative responses or problems with your students?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'. Feel free to check also the 'Other' option to specify your answer or add your comment.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other:

10. What is (or would be) the main source of your creative writing exercises? *

Please check one or more options. Feel free to check the 'Other' option to add your comment.

☐ ELT Books

☐ Textbooks

☐ Websites

☐ I (would) create my own activities

☐ Other:

11. Are there any sources of creative writing activities that you would like to recommend to other teachers of English?

Please, feel free to share various websites, books, textbooks, etc.

12. Do you think there is enough time in your lessons for using creative writing exercises? *

Please state 'yes' or 'no'. Feel free to check also the 'Other' option to specify your answer or add your comment.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other:

13. Have you experienced using creative writing exercises during your own English studies? *

☐ Yes, it was beneficial.

☐ Yes, but it was not beneficial at all.

☐ No.

☐ No, but I would like to.

☐ Other:

14. Do you feel competent to use creative writing in your English lessons? *

☐ To a Great Extent

☐ Somewhat

☐ Very Little

☐ Not at All

15. Do you believe that creative writing is predominantly aimed at gifted students? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other:

16. How do you (or would you) use creative writing exercises in your own lessons? *

Feel free to check as many options as you need as well as provide your own answer.

- ☐ Warm-up
- ☐ Pre-activity
- ☐ Main activity
- ☐ Post-activity
- ☐ Homework
- ☐ Other:

17. What form of creative writing do you (or would you) prefer in teaching English? *

Check as many options as you need. Feel free to provide your own answer.

- ☐ Poetry
- ☐ Storytelling
- ☐ Songwriting
- ☐ Screenwriting
- ☐ Playwrighting
- ☐ Other:

18. What areas of language learning do you think can improve the most by using creative writing regularly? *

Choose as many answers as you need. Feel free to specify your answer using the 'Other' option.

- ☐ Grammatical accuracy
- ☐ Lexical choice
- ☐ Sentence structure
- ☐ Self-confidence
- ☐ Motivation
- ☐ Other:

19. What area of creative writing might be your weakness? *

Choose as many answers as you need. Feel free to specify your answer using the 'other' field.

- ☐ Preparation
- ☐ Performance
- ☐ Evaluation
- ☐ None of them

☐ Other:

20. Have you heard about any project in the Czech Republic or abroad using creative writing in language teaching? *

Please state 'yes' or 'no'. Feel free to check also the 'Other' option to provide examples.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

☐ Other:

21. Do you know about someone (your colleague) who uses creative writing in teaching English on a regular basis? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

22. Do you know any electronic tools that might be helpful for students during the writing process? *

Please state 'yes' or 'no'. Feel free to check also the 'Other' option to share some of the tools (i.e. websites, dictionaries, etc.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

☐ Other:

23. Is there anything that you don't like about the idea of using creative writing in teaching English? *

24. How often do you think creative writing should be used in teaching writing? *

- ☐ Very Frequently
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Very Rarely
- ☐ Never

25. Do you think you could start using creative writing in your lessons immediately? *

- ☐ Yes, no problem.
- ☐ Yes, but...
- ☐ No, not immediately.
- ☐ No, I don't think it would help my students.

26. What is the age group of your students? *

Please check the age groups of your students.

- ☐ up to 11
- ☐ 12-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ over 31

27. What is your (teaching) qualification? *

Please, check one of the options. If your teaching qualification is not in the list, feel free to add it.

- ☐ Master's degree in teaching English
- ☐ Bachelor's degree in teaching English
- ☐ Master's degree in English Language and Literature
- ☐ Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature
- ☐ Other:

28. At what type of school do you teach? *

Please choose one option. If the school where you teach is not in the list, please use the 'other' option and specify your answer.

- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Secondary school
- ☐ Grammar school
- ☐ University
- ☐ Language school
- ☐ Other:

29. Where do you teach English? *

Please state the district (okres) and/or region (kraj) where you teach.

30. How long have you been teaching English? *

Appendix 4

In the last section of the thesis I provide some of my poems and verses created both during the creative writing courses taken at the Faculty of Education as well as in my free time. Each of the poems reflects a different assignment and various types of creative writing activities. I believe that teachers using creative writing activities should write their pieces together with their students and share them in order to inspire them, establish a positive relationship and mutual trust.

On Poetry

Poetry is hard to write.
Third week, my paper is still white.
What was the topic? Was it anger?
Why on earth I don't remember.

I longed to write a piece of art,
unfortunately, I wasn't smart.
What I did was really bad,
"Let's go to pub!" is what I said.

The next three weeks, dot dot dot,
gee, I couldn't find the right plot.
I slept on a bench, out in a park,
Tried to find words, my mind was dark.

When in my veins now isn't wine,
my mind suddenly starts to shine.
I sit down and words come fast,
I feel it'll remain unsurpassed.

I read it three times in a row,
wait – this reminds me of Mr. Poe.
I feed Google with my poem,
Shock! I'll I need a jeroboam.

OMG! It's Poe indeed,
in this field I can't succeed.
Here you have it in black and white,
poetry is hard to write.

Just where: part II

Black and pink, red and white,
I love shoes, there's no doubt.
Green and brown, beige and grey,
OMG, how much are they?

Purple, khaki, violet and lime,
admiring sneakers isn't a crime!
Orchid, thistle, olive and plum,
these belong to my dearest chum!

Orange, aqua, maroon and gold,
my passion for boots was long foretold.
Lavender, navy and all shades of blues,
Where did you get those fabulous shoes?

A midnight train story

An eager collector of expensive watches,
illuminated the darkness with a box of matches.

On a board of luxurious international train,
crept in a compartment —
cunningly hidden in the sound of midnight rain.

In the dim light he silently committed his crime,
only later to find out — what he stole
wasn't worth a dime.

Is it as clear as a bell?

I

What is art?

Well, see—it's really hard.

A week ago art sounded really smart,
yesterday art looked like a shopping cart.

Today art tastes like a home-made tart,
tomorrow—art can smell like an arrayed fart.

Art can be cool, art can fall apart,
art will never make you feel you have a broken heart.

O

CONSIDERATENESS

A fabulous story with a cool surprise,
in a moment you'll see with your own eyes.
Fifteen letters, it's quite a long word,
but fifteen words? Well, that sounds absurd.
Let me show you without any pains,
that it really so many words contains!

Are you ready?
You're gonna have fun,
forget your guitar, cause we're beginning in
three, two, one!

SIDE by side is CON and RATE,
and I haven't yet mentioned the word DERATE.
Letter names ES and EN are hidden inside,
as well as animals such as RAT and IDE.
CONSIDER, ERA, TEN and ATE,
Look! There's also CONSIDERATE.
Preposition ON and the very last NESS,
do count them once more and shout 'YES'!

Wasn't that marvellous and witty, too
I bet you've just discovered something new!

@}-,`-.
 @-}--
 Locked out there in the creepy towers,
 dying slowly...for so many hours.
 Wishing that he had special powers,
 he could send them just a few showers?
 A strange creature that its prey devours,
 rambles through garden – but not like ours.
 The overgrown shrubs he hopelessly scours,
 searching for a key – to rescue his beloved flowers!
 --{-@
 .-'-,{-@

Chocolate

Crying?
Hard day?
Or on cloud nine?
Chocolate will surely make you feel fine!
Only for you produced by the finest brand,
Lindt has the power to become your best friend.
Absolutely a must without any hint of soy,
Take a bar or two and simply –
Enjoy!

Crossroads

It was November 18, a day like many others in fall. It was just a regular working day, however, I felt there was something mysterious in the air. It was dark and cold outside and I was driving my car through a downpour for a while when I reached a familiar crossroads. I had driven this way so many times in my life that there was nothing outside that I wouldn't have noticed before. I knew every blade in the grass, every pebble on the road and all the stars in the sky, yet I felt there a way different than usual.

I wasn't driving for more than 10 minutes but on that day everything seemed to take much longer than I had been used to. Maybe it was because of the heavy rain that it took me so long to reach this crossroads, maybe it was just me who took his time. The traffic was slow, wipers were as busy as never before, and the rain drops falling on the windshield gathered into rills, creating unique ornaments allowing my mind to wander through a valley of my memories bitter and sweet, recent and past.

Peacefully waiting, hypnotised by blurred lights of all colours passing by I was listening to one of my favorite songs. I'm sure it was an instant, but to me it seemed like ages. I saw many pictures and projections, yet there was one

particular, which stuck in my mind for a while. I saw myself back in the old days sitting on a bench at the side of the ice rink, putting on my skates. I saw fascinatingly shining surface, sparkling ice, humid air and all the shadows casted by the factory-like lighting of the rink. I saw myself stepping on the ice, gaining speed and watching my pale complexion going red because of the chilly air. Even now, after so many years I can remember the sound of the wind passing by my ears. I had been so elated then because I knew this was the way I had always wanted to go. If only my parents had seen my future as bright as I did. Standing at the crossroads in front of the ice rink they had decided for me which way to turn, but how different my life could have been?

Sitting silent in my car, I let my dream disappear in the night, but as I was looking through millions of shining stars on the windshield I understood. I was gazing at the glistening street, when suddenly in the distance, somewhere between a number of blurred red tail lights I saw the glow of the green light I was so long waiting for. It was my turn.

Christmas Note



* The *
* end of *
* the year, *
* chaos is here. *
* You feel the rush? *
* Stop *
* and say Hush! *
* Calm down and sing, only *
* peace it will bring. Sit down *
* and *
* read, your *
* heart will not bleed. Put *
* sweets in your mouth, your mind *
* will head south. Imagine a rest – in the best spa, *
Enjoy
the
holidays,
&
See ya!