



Creative Expression and Writing Proficiency of Junior High School Students in Special Program in the Arts Class

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Abstract: *This study aimed to determine the relationship between creative expression and writing proficiency. The respondents were grade 9 students enrolled in the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) class. The researcher employed a descriptive correlational design with a test questionnaire consisting. Statistical tools such as frequency count, weighted mean, and Pearson correlation were used to collect and analyze numerical data. Results indicated that respondents had a moderate awareness of their creative expression in terms of writing. Their writing proficiency was rated as good in grammar and syntax, fair in the organization of ideas, and good in content development. The statistical result showed a strong relationship between writing proficiency and creative expression, with significant associations found in grammar and syntax, organization of ideas, and content development. A positive correlation was also observed between writing skills and levels of creative expression, suggesting that enhanced creative expression in writing is linked with improved writing proficiency. The findings underscore the importance of fostering both artistic expression and writing skills. The strong relationships between various writing proficiency criteria and creative expression highlight the interaction between creativity and effective writing. Thus, it is recommended that the pedagogical integration of writing techniques and creative expressions must be implemented in arts class.*

Keywords: *Creative Expression, Prose, Poetry, Writing Proficiency.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Creative expression is the way people convey their ideas, feelings, and viewpoints through various methods such as music, art, writing, or drama. This process enhances creative



thinking and communication skills, enabling individuals to share their unique thoughts and emotions with others. Meanwhile, creative writing encompasses a wide array of literary forms, such as prose and poetry, each born from a mind teeming with imagination. The primary goal of creative writing revolves around expressing an array of emotions, thoughts, and concepts. It involves the intricate process of reshaping familiar ideas into something new and unique, merging critical thinking to present ideas in a captivating manner (Lucas & Spencer, 2017).

Poetry and prose are intertwined modes of creative writing, distinguished by poetry's condensed language and rhythmic patterns, and prose's narrative clarity and structure. According to Weltek (2018), the history of the great, terrible battle between prose and poetry continues to influence the era of modern literature. According to their study, they demonstrated poetry's superiority. While poetry can tell stories, prose rarely focuses on plot points, settings, and characters. Rather, poetry has an imaginative focus. Words are allowed to break their conventional bounds in the goal of expressing emotions. But, generally speaking, prose expression tends to have a wider reach than poetry. Prose covers a diverse range of forms, including novels, short stories, essays, articles, and others, which enjoy broad consumption across various societies and languages. Although poetry retains its importance in literature and boasts a dedicated audience, prose writing often achieves greater visibility in mainstream publishing and media (Ocampo, 2024).

In the realm of education, creative expression plays a fundamental role in comprehensive learning. It functions within classrooms to stimulate cognitive growth, encourage critical thinking, and foster individuality. Through the integration of creative techniques in educational frameworks, students are prompted to articulate their thoughts via writing, arts, discussions, and diverse mediums, not only amplifying their academic performance but also instilling a deeper comprehension and admiration for various forms of expression.

In the context of the Philippines' academic sphere, programs like the Special Program in the Arts provide a specialized platform for students to refine and explore their creative abilities within a structured learning setting. These initiatives aim to enhance traditional academic methodologies by integrating creative expression, nurturing students' talent and innovation alongside their core academic studies. The program offers six areas and one of this is creative writing. It trains the students to explore and write their own ideas and experiences; they will study and work on all genres like poetry, fiction, non-fiction, etc. According to Armea et al. (2022), writing proficiency refers to the ability to effectively communicate ideas and information through written language, including vocabulary choice, grammar usage, and organization of content. Ocampo (2018) described five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The description of each major level is representative of a specific range of abilities form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels.

In fact, the Department of Education accords significant priority to the cultivation of writing proficiency, as evidenced within its official curriculum guide designed for students encompassing grades 7 to 10. This commitment is manifest in the deliberate inclusion of writing and composition within the delineated set of target competencies. Additionally, DepEd designed the Special Program for Arts under DepEd Memorandum No. 149, s. 2011, which provides learners with a chance to develop and enhance their talents in art fields



including Creative Writing. Students enrolled in the Special Program for Arts (SPA) with a focus on Creative Writing are presented with expansive avenues to engage in various forms of literary expression, such as poetry, fiction, playwriting, and journalism. The said program was adopted by several public high schools in the country, as well as schools from the Bicol Region. With the foregoing statements, this study aims to determine the level of awareness of the respondents in poetry and prose as creative expression in writing and investigate the writing proficiency levels of Junior High School students enrolled in the Special Program in Arts.

2. RELATED LITERATURE

Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Theory of Writing, introduced in 1981, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate nature of the writing process. This theory, emphasizing the dynamic and recursive aspects of writing, suggests that the act of writing involves continuous feedback loops and revisions rather than a linear progression. In the specific context of the study on the Creative Expression and Writing Proficiency of Junior High School Students in the Special Program in the Arts (SPA), Flower and Hayes' theory becomes a valuable lens through which to analyze how students engage in the writing process within a creative context. The theory's focus on planning and goal setting illuminates the cognitive processes behind students' initial approach to creative writing tasks. Furthermore, the emphasis on execution and revision sheds light on how students in the SPA class continually revisit and refine their creative expressions, showcasing their ability to critically assess and improve their written works. The theory emphasizes the integration of knowledge and abilities during the writing process as a relevant approach for investigating how students blend artistic and writing skills to convey their creative thoughts. Additionally, considering the situational and contextual influences on writing, the theory prompts an investigation into how the unique environment of the SPA program shapes and influences students' writing processes and overall creative expression. In essence, Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Theory of Writing serves as a robust framework for unraveling the complexities of how junior high school students in the SPA class approach and engage in creative writing tasks, contributing nuanced insights to the broader study.

Meanwhile, Dialogic Theory, rooted in Bakhtin's work in 1981, proves valuable in studying the writing proficiency of Special Program in Arts (SPA) students by highlighting the inherent multi-voiced nature of their writing, accommodating the dynamic interplay of creative and academic voices, encouraging creative exploration, fostering cultural awareness, guiding constructive feedback, promoting reflective writing practices, adapting pedagogical strategies, and providing an interdisciplinary framework for understanding their dialogic writing practices across artistic and academic disciplines. This approach recognizes and leverages the diverse voices, perspectives, and cultural influences that enrich SPA students' writing, ultimately enhancing their writing proficiency in both creative and academic contexts.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences in 1980s, with a focus on linguistic intelligence, is a significant tool in the study of Creative Expression and Writing Proficiency among Junior High School Students in the Special Program in the Arts (SPA). The study by



Shayeghi and Hosseinioun (2015) examined the correlation between various aspects of multiple intelligence and grammar performance. Their findings indicate that linguistic intelligence plays a significant role in predicting grammatical accuracy. In this case, linguistic intelligence—which is characterized by fluency in language usage and comprehension—becomes crucial. Students who show linguistic awareness within the SPA curriculum have a great command of language and grammar, which allows them to express complicated concepts and inspire strong emotions in their prose and poetry. By concentrating on linguistic intelligence, teachers can get an important understanding of their students' expressive capacities. This enables them to design specialized teaching strategies that will improve students' creative writing performance within the creative framework of the SPA program.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design. In the descriptive component of the study, the extent of awareness of creative expression in prose and poetry of the participants was assessed through a survey questionnaire. Additionally, the writing proficiency level of the participants was assessed by assigning a writing topic for assessment. In the correlational aspect of the research, the study aimed to establish a significant relationship between the extent of awareness about creative expression and the writing proficiency of the participants. To ensure a representative sample, a stratified random sampling technique was employed, focusing on the junior high school students within Special Program in Arts class. In each SPA class, a stratified random sampling technique was applied to select what grade level from 7, 8, 9, and 10 was the respondent.

The questionnaire in this study was adopted from the study of Banta and Palomba (2015) which employed a Likert-type scale to determine the awareness levels. The scale ranged from five (5) denoting "extremely aware," through four (4) for "moderately aware," three (3) for "somewhat aware," two (2) for "slightly aware," and one (1) for "not at all aware." The questionnaire was administered to assess participants' extent of awareness of creative expression in writing prose and poetry. Meanwhile, a writing activity was assigned to the same respondents, featuring an essay topic entitled "Memories I Wish I Could Leave Behind" to evaluate participants' writing proficiency. Consistency in scoring, a crucial aspect of rubric-based assessments, was determined by the reliability of scores (Banta & Palomba, 2015). A rubric-based assessment was then applied, considering content development (40%), grammar and syntax (30%), and organization of ideas (30%). After collecting the data, a comprehensive analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, which includes frequency counts, ranking, weighted means, percentage, and mean. Moreover, the Pearson correlation method was employed to explore potential statistically significant relationships between awareness of creative expression and writing proficiency levels.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Creative Expression in Writing

The respondents of this study were 25 Grade 9 Junior High School students enrolled in the Special Program in the Arts (SPA). In the survey, a closed-ended survey questionnaire was



used to gather data on the participants' awareness levels, employing a five-point scale (5 indicating full awareness, 4 for moderate awareness, 3 for partial awareness, 2 for minimal awareness, and 1 for no awareness).

Table 1. Extent of Awareness in Creative Expression in Writing Prose and Poetry

Statement Indicators	Weighted Mean (WM)	Rank	Interpretation
1. I am aware about the importance of structure and coherence in my creative writing.	3.92	1	Moderately Aware
2. When expressing emotions through words, I am familiar in using figurative language and artistic devices.	3.68	4	Moderately Aware
3. I am knowledgeable of experimenting with language, wordplay, and unique expression.	3.48	9	Moderately Aware
4. When crafting my writing, I am aware of conveying a clear message.	3.88	2	Moderately Aware
5. When crafting my writing, I am aware of evoking emotions and imagery.	3.60	5.5	Moderately Aware
6. I am conscious of the use of metaphors and symbolism as a powerful tool in creative expression.	3.48	9	Moderately Aware
7. In my writing, I am knowledgeable of rhythm and musicality of language.	3.44	12	Moderately Aware
8. I am aware of structured narrative when writing.	3.40	14.5	Moderately Aware
9. I am familiar of free-form expression in writing.	3.44	12	Moderately Aware
10. I am aware of finding inspiration in nature, emotions, or abstract concepts.	3.76	3	Moderately Aware
11. I am familiar of the importance of conveying personal experiences and emotion in my creative writing.	3.60	5.5	Moderately Aware
12. I am aware of the importance of editing for both clarity and poetic resonance in revising my work.	3.44	12	Moderately Aware
13. I am informed of cultural and historical contexts that may	3.36	17	Moderately Aware



influence the interpretation of my writing.			
14. I am aware of experimenting with different narrative voices and point of view to enhance story telling.	3.36	17	Moderately Aware
15. When seeking feedback on my writing, I am familiar of analyzing critiques to improve both technical aspects of emotional resonance.	3.48	9	Moderately Aware
16. When incorporating dialogue into my writing, I am knowledgeable of using it to reveal character traits and advance the plot.	3.32	19	Somewhat Aware
17. I am aware of the reader's perspective and interpretation when selecting specific words and phrases in my writing.	3.36	17	Moderately Aware
18. I am conscious of the pacing and tempo in my writing to control the reader's response.	3.28	20	Somewhat Aware
19. When exploring themes in my writing, I am aware of maintaining consistency and depth throughout my work.	3.52	7	Moderately Aware
20. I am familiar of varying sentence structures and lengths to create rhythm and flow of my writing.	3.40	14.5	Moderately Aware
Overall Mean (OM)	3.50	--	Moderately Aware

Table 1 presents the results of the survey questionnaire assessing the extent of awareness of the respondents in their creative expression in writing in terms of prose and poetry. The top three ranks were: the awareness of the importance of structure and coherence in my creative writing, Ranked 1 (WM 3.92; Moderately Aware); awareness in conveying a clear message in writing, Ranked 2 (WM 3.88; Moderately Aware); and awareness of finding inspiration in nature, emotions, and abstract concepts, Ranked 3 (WM 3.76; Moderately Aware). In the contrary, the least rank is about the consciousness of the pacing and tempo in writing to control the reader's response (WM 3.28; Somewhat Aware). The overall mean of the survey was 3.50, indicating a moderate awareness. This suggested that Grade 9 SPA students possessed a moderate level of awareness in expressing themselves creatively through writing, both in prose and poetry.



Research has shown that participation in arts programs, including writing, enhances students' confidence and creativity (Winner & Hetland, 2016). This can contribute to their overall awareness and competence in expressing themselves in literature, supporting the notion that Grade 9 SPA students have reached a moderate level of awareness. The findings coalesce with McKay (2018) discusses the role of creative writing in developing students' voice and identity, emphasizing that students often navigate their thoughts and feelings through prose and poetry. Studies have also indicated a correlation between exposure to creative writing practices and the development of expressive writing skills among middle and high school students (Graham & Perin, 2017). This directly implies that students who engage in writing activities show improvements in articulating their thoughts creatively.

Writing Proficiency Level

A custom rubric-based assessment was used to analyze the students' writing skills, focusing on grammar and syntax, organization of ideas, and content development.

Table 2. Writing Proficiency Level in Grammar and Syntax, Organization of Ideas, and Content Development

Level	Grammar and Syntax		Organizations of Ideas		Content Development	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Excellent	1	4	0	0	3	12
Very Good	9	36	0	0	11	44
Good	9	36	14	56	5	20
Fair	4	16	8	32	4	16
Poor	2	8	3	12	2	8
Total	25	100	25	88	25	100
	Average level	Interpretation	Average level	Interpretation		
	21.84	Good	17.92	Fair	27.72	Good
Standard Deviation	5.84		5.43		10.16	

Legend:						
Grammar and Syntax & Organizations of Ideas			Content Development			
Interval Score		Level	Interval Score		Level	
30	-	Excellent	40	-	Excellent	
25-29	-	Very Good	30-39	-	Very Good	
20-24	-	Good	20-29	-	Good	
10-19	-	Fair	10-19		Fair	
5-9	-	Poor	5-9		Poor	



Table 2 shows the results of the respondents' essays, illustrating their proficiency levels in writing, encompassing grammar and syntax, organization of ideas, and content development. The content development was the highest rank in the writing proficiency level of students with a weighted mean of 277.72 and was interpreted as good. Meanwhile, the lowest rank was the organizations of ideas with a weighted mean of 17.02 which was interpreted as fair. These analyses evaluated the writing skills of Grade 9 students. The open-ended writing activity yielded an average level of 21.84 in grammar and syntax, with the interpretation indicating "good." This suggested that the Grade 9 SPA students demonstrated proficiency in grammar and syntax. Additionally, the activity attained an average level of 17.92 in organizing ideas, interpreted as "fair." This implied that the respondents showed moderate competency in organizing their ideas in writing. Furthermore, the activity achieved an average level of 27.72 in content development, interpreted as "good." This indicated that the respondents excelled in developing content within their written work.

The findings corroborated with other researches that consistently shown students enrolled in as artistic or creative fields, may have varied outcomes in language proficiency compared to their peers in traditional academic tracks. According to Atkinson (2015), students in arts programs might prioritize creative expression over conventional language use, which can affect their grammar and syntax skills.

Hill (2017), found a similar view after investigating the relationship between linguistic creativity in arts programs and conventional grammar and syntax skills. He pointed that while artistic students may express language differently, they can also develop nuanced language abilities that might not align with traditional educational benchmarks. This is in parallel with those of Wei and Zhou (2018) who emphasized the challenges that students in specialized programs face in acquiring formal grammar skills. Their study found that despite engagement in language-centric activities, students in SPA programs often struggle with conventional grammar and syntax as a result of their focus on artistic skills.

Creative Expression and Writing Proficiency

This study analyzed the data from respondents regarding their awareness of creative expression and its impact on writing skills, significant correlations were observed across multiple dimensions. This included grammar and syntax, organization of ideas, and content development. With a significance level of 0.05, the results underscored a meaningful relationship between creativity and effective writing abilities, emphasizing the importance of nurturing both aspects for enhanced communication.

Table 3. Relationship between Creative Expression and Writing Proficiency

Creative expression		Writing proficiency level			
		Grammar and Syntax	Organizations of Ideas	Content Development	Overall
Extent of Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.571*	.641*	.531*	.586*



	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.011	.031	.028
	N	25	25	25	25

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the conducted survey about the extent of awareness of the respondents in their creative expression and numerical result in their writing proficiency through writing activity, it shows that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), hence, the correlation observed between the variables being analyzed is statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05, suggesting that the correlation is unlikely to have occurred by random chance alone and that the relationship observed between the variables is statistically significant.

This finding suggests that higher levels of awareness in creative expression among the respondents are associated with better writing proficiency. The significance of this relationship indicates that the correlation is unlikely to have occurred by random chance, implying that increasing awareness in creative expression could potentially enhance writing skills. It implies that educational strategies aimed at increasing students' awareness of their creative processes may lead to improvements in their writing proficiency. Educational institutions might consider integrating more comprehensive modules and workshops that encourage and develop creative expression in both prose and poetry. This could involve collaborative projects, exposure to diverse writing styles, and providing students with more opportunities for creative practice.

To refine the creative writing capabilities of students, there is a need for robust assessment mechanisms that provide constructive feedback. Implementing formative assessments that focus not just on the end product but also on the creative process can help students become more aware of their creative potential and areas for growth. While there is potential for arts education to enhance language skills, specific challenges persist that warrant targeted pedagogical strategies; thus, educators and curriculum developers may should incorporate creative expression activities into writing programs to foster improved writing skills. Activity such as writing fiction, poetry, and other creative formats can foster empathy and cognitive engagement that could enable students to better express their inner thoughts and feelings. Further research could explore targeted interventions to enhance creative awareness and assess their impact on writing outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the study, it was revealed that Grade 9 students enrolled in the Special Program possessed a moderate level of awareness in expressing themselves creatively through writing that suggested a need for targeted interventions to enhance creative expression in writing among the students. Meanwhile, they exhibited an average level of proficiency in grammar and syntax, reflecting a strong grasp of language mechanics. This indicated a solid foundation upon which their writing skills were built. However, while their competency in organizing ideas was moderate, there existed an opportunity for improvement in structuring essays to enhance clarity and coherence. Emphasizing techniques for structuring and sequencing ideas could aid in refining this aspect. Conversely, the students excelled in content development, showcasing their proficiency in generating and articulating ideas within their written



compositions. This proficiency underscored their capacity for creative and substantive expression, highlighting a strength that could be further nurtured and cultivated. Overall, while demonstrating strengths in grammar and content development, there was a potential for growth in refining organizational skills to elevate the overall quality and effectiveness of their written work. The results also highlighted the significance of encouraging artistic expression in addition to writing skills to improve communication efficacy. The strong relationships found between different writing proficiency criteria and creative expression highlighted the interaction between creativity and effective communication. To develop writing abilities and creativity at the same time, educational settings need to implement integrated techniques. This would have provided a comprehensive strategy for developing successful communication. Furthermore, there is a need for robust assessment mechanisms that provide constructive feedback. Implementing formative assessments that focus not just on the end product but also on the creative process can help students become more aware of their creative potential and areas for growth.

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