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THE PRACTICE OF CREATIVE WRITING FOR BUILDING PHILOLOGY STUDENTS' RESILIENCE

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The article analyses the creative writing practice as an instrument for building the resilience of philology students, namely, future translators. The paper outlines the meaning of the term “resilience” as the ability to “bounce back” from negative life experiences, deal with stress, recover from traumatic experiences, and continue growing and learning. It is stated that resilience includes metacognitive adaptation, sociability, optimism, perseverance, and communicative efficacy. In terms of the recent pandemic and especially the war in Ukraine, this skill acquires even more importance and necessity to be developed in the young people who will have to regain confidence and strength in order to rebuild our country. The author emphasizes that one of the effective ways of building resilience in students is creative writing. This practice helps students become more self-confident, raises their self-awareness, the ability to study and deal with traumatic events and negative life experiences, to process the accumulated stress, and fosters their motivation and engagement. Creative writing also helps equip students to deal with the real world, quickly adapt to changes and accept them as a part of life by “playing” different possible scenarios of events in their heads. By writing personal stories, students are able to make sense of their thoughts and emotions, as their written personal stories help building a sense of self. The stages of the creative writing process are described, which include preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. The author also provides examples of creative writing activities that vary depending upon the size and difficulty, can take different time, be differentiated according to the level of students, and used for a full-scale or warm-up activity. These activities can be effective in using during the foreign language teaching and learning to build students’ resilience and develop their psychological and emotional well-being. The complex effect of creative writing practice both inside and outside the classroom can greatly contribute to building students’ resilience and provide them with a self-regulation tool they can use in their future lives.

ПРАКТИКА КРЕАТИВНОГО ПИСЬМА ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ СТІЙКОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ-ФІЛОЛОГІВ

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Ключові слова: історії, навички 21 століття, психологічне й емоційне благополуччя, особи, які вивчають іноземну мову, адаптація.

У статті аналізується практика креативного письма як інструмент формування стійкості студентів-філологів, а саме майбутніх перекладачів. У роботі термін «стійкість» розуміється як здатність «відновлюватися» від негативного життєвого досвіду, справлятися зі стресом, відновлюватися після травматичних подій і продовжувати рости та навчатися. Установлено, що стійкість включає метакогнітивну адаптацію, комунікабельність, оптимізм, наполегливість і комунікативну ефективність. В умовах нещодавньої пандемії й нинішньої війни в Україні ця навичка набуває ще більшого значення та необхідності розвитку в молодих людей, яким доведеться відновити свої впевненість і силу, щоб відбудувати нашу країну. Автор підкреслює, що одним з ефективних способів формування стійкості у студентів є креативне письмо. Ця практика допомагає студентам стати більш упевненими в собі, підвищує їхню самосвідомість, здатність навчатися, справлятися із травматичними подіями та негативним життєвим досвідом, перероблювати накопичений стрес, сприяє їхній мотивації та залученості. Творче письмо також допомагає студентам сприймати реальний світ, швидко адаптуватися до змін і сприймати їх як частину життя, «розігруючи» у голові різні можливі сценарії подій. Пишучи особисті історії, студенти можуть краще зрозуміти свої думки й емоції, оскільки особисті історії допомагають розвинути самосвідомість. Описано етапи процесу креативного письма, які включають підготовку, інкубацію, просвітлення та перевірку. Автор також наводить приклади вправ із креативного письма, які відрізняються залежно від розміру та складності, можуть займати різний час, диференціюватись відповідно до рівня студентів і використовуватись для повноцінної діяльності чи розминки. Ці вправи можуть бути ефективними у використанні під час викладання та вивчення іноземної мови для формування стійкості студентів і розвитку їхнього психологічного й емоційного благополуччя. Комплексний ефект практики творчого письма як в аудиторії, так і поза нею може значною мірою сприяти розвитку стійкості студентів і надати їм інструмент саморегуляції, який вони зможуть використовувати у своєму майбутньому житті.

Problem statement. Higher education has become not only a way of imparting knowledge in a particular field to future professionals but also a means of developing skills that will help students become more successful and active members of society able to adapt to rapid changes in the modern world and face various challenges. The present-day situation in Ukraine, namely, the state of war, has proven once again that we, as teachers, should be especially interested in developing students' resilience

to the current difficulties and problems. Resilience is defined as the ability to “bounce back” from life's inevitable pressures and hard times [1]. It is something that helps us deal with stress, recover from traumatic experiences, and continue growing and learning. Resilience is directly linked to better health and longer life, more success in studies and work, happier relationships, and less depression [2, p. 3]. Therefore, this skill can and should be learned and shared as one of the most important of the 21st-century skills.

The ways of building resilience can be different depending on the learning environment and teaching context. In terms of teaching philology students, we believe that one of the most effective means of building resilience is the practice of creative writing. Except for developing students' English language competence in terms of writing skills, this practice has been proven to positively affect their emotional and psychological well-being thus leading to enhanced resilience.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The role of resilience in the educational process has been studied by K. Ballenger-Browning, B. Bernard, V. Caruana, J. Cornelius-White, D. Fletcher, D. Johnson, M. Keye, H. Marsh, A. Martin, A. Pidgeon, and M. Sarkar.

In terms of building resilience during foreign language acquisition, studies have been conducted by T. Capstick, M. Delaney, T. Kim, Y. Kim, K. Nguyen, R. Oxford, S. Ryan, L. Stanley, N. Stanley, Y. Wang, L. Zhang.

Speaking about the positive effects of creative writing on developing students' emotional and psychological well-being, it is worth mentioning the works by Ch. Anderson, A. Brewster, J. Berman, L. DeSalvo, S. Lepore, M. MacCurdy, J. Pennebaker, S. Zimmerman. However, the practice of building the resilience of students learning foreign languages through specific creative writing activities has not been a subject of research yet.

Research aim and objectives. The main aim of our research is to determine the most effective ways of using creative writing activities in English for building philology students' resilience.

Main material. The concept of resilience is relatively new to modern science as it appeared at the end of the 20th century. However, it has been attracting growing attention recently due to the latest events, namely, the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Kim and Kim define resilience as "the sum of an individual's abilities that allow him or her to bounce back from adversity and even thrive in the face of difficult times" [3, p. 2]. They report that the components of resilience include metacognitive adaptation, sociability, optimism, perseverance, and communicative efficacy. Oxford defines resilience as the capacity to face and recover from adversity, and such aspects as self-efficacy, emotional positivity, productive goal orientations, ethics, a sense of meaning, compassionate relationships, and opportunities for participation contribute to this capacity [4]. One of the approaches to defining resilience states that this sum of abilities incorporates personal factors such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, resourcefulness, and health that are believed to be helpful in being resilient. The second approach presents resilience as a complex and multidimensional process [5]. We agree that resil-

ience is a combination of both since if it were only a complex of innate abilities, it could not be developed. However, multiple studies prove that it can be successfully built by different means, including education. It is a dynamic capacity susceptible to growth and enhancement through deliberate action in educational environments.

American Psychological Association names 10 ways to build resilience: 1) making connections; 2) avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems; 3) accepting that change is a part of living; 4) moving toward your goals; 5) taking decisive actions; 6) looking for opportunities for self-discovery; 7) nurturing a positive view of yourself; 8) keeping things in perspective; 9) maintaining a hopeful outlook; 10) taking care of yourself [6]. The higher education learning environment provides the necessary context and tools for incorporating these ways into the teaching practice. Namely, scientists have already discovered the close connection between language learning and building resilience. For instance, Nguyen argues, "to succeed and maintain their well-being, foreign language learners must be resilient, able to bounce back from stress" [7, p. 2]. Oxford shows clear ties between psychology and second language learning when describing the development of resilience that is positively influenced by language learners' achievement and proficiency [4]. Resilience transcends the classroom walls because language and the capacity to persist in learning can have a more profound and sustained impact on people's lives. This happens as during language learning students greatly interact, thus supporting themselves and each other in their daily struggles, and fostering both recovery from negative experiences and continued resistance to the new ones. Notably, UNICEF has conducted research proving the role of resilience in supporting general self-determination in the face of conflict and post-conflict settings [8]. Thus, an appropriate learning context can foster resilience and diminish the harmful effects of other factors on it. Besides, learning requires cooperative problem-solving, and perseverance, especially through challenges, mistakes, and stress that help to build resilience. Therefore, bringing positive emotions, creating a comfortable learning atmosphere, and developing creativity in the classroom are greatly associated with building resilience. The learning environment becomes a safe space for students to work through the consequences of traumatic life experiences by means of creative activities, play, and stories [9].

Creativity is one of the central concepts in developing resilience. First of all, it is considered to be one of the main skills of the 21st century. Secondly, as we create, whether it is a blog, poetry, or prose, we reconnect with our own innate knowing. A psychologist Pinkola Estes calls creativity "our most valuable

asset that gives outwardly and feels inwardly at every level: psychic, spiritual, mental, emotive, and economic”. Creativity connects us to our essential nature, which is intertwined with emotions, thoughts, and beliefs [10, p. 299].

Remarkably, one of the best ways to build resilience through creativity is creative writing. DeSalvo in her book *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives* states that “Creativity is a basic human response to trauma and a natural emergency defense system” [11].

The first person, who proved the positive effects of creative writing on psychological and emotional well-being, was a social psychologist James Pennebaker. In his book *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*, he described his experiment justifying that writing about trauma can help get rid of its negative effects and lead to enhanced physical and emotional well-being [12]. He claimed demonstrated that creative writing helped heal from trauma: he did a study where people wrote in great detail about a difficult event in their lives for fifteen minutes, four days in a row. He said that was all that was required to have a salubrious effect. Since that time, over 200 research studies have proved that creative writing can improve people’s physical and emotional health.

A storyteller and a creative writing expert Christina Nichol, MFA, describes multiple benefits of creative writing for second language learners, stating that it helps reduce leveling problems because students focus on individual expression and personal progress rather than an ultimate standard; increases motivation, group cohesiveness, learner autonomy, cooperation among learners; aids language development on all levels; develops healthy process writing skills, critical thinking, and close reading; increases students’ respect for published stories and how difficult they are to write; increases creative reading; brings play, experimentation, and exploration back into the classroom; reduces stress and aids in healing [13]. The act of writing also requires the act of observing details in new ways and therefore aids in developing a new vision that helps students get out of stuck patterns that they might find themselves in. It also requires listening with new ears, when the student is attentively listening to the rhythms of speech in a dialogue assignment.

Creative writing helps us make sense of our speculations and feelings. Our written personal stories help building a sense of self [14]. Louise DeSalvo says that through telling our stories, we can transform our and others’ lives. In her opinion, such a type of writing can even help us heal by giving us spiritual and emotional insight, helping the writer come to terms with something painful, and helping us explore the deeper recesses of ourselves [12]. Writing from students’ deepest feelings by paying attention to

their emotional state, help them find awareness about their strong points, thus leading to personal growth and healing [15]. Besides, creative writing helps students process their emotions and cope with stress and anxiety because creative writing provides us with a medium for processing accumulated stress and challenging difficult moments in our life. Creative writing also helps equip students to deal with the real world, quickly adapt to changes and accept them as a part of life by “playing” different possible scenarios of events in their heads. Students become more self-empowered as creative writing broadens their imaginations visualizing a world beyond what’s physically present. When students are creating an entirely different universe with their own words, everything seems to be under control. This sense of control and creation helps them realize the possibilities of their actions in the real world. They realize that they have the power to control their futures [16]. This self-empowerment is critically important for building resilience. Though, it may be difficult to write about trauma while a student is in the midst of trauma. Creative writing might be beneficial and most likely to build resilience when one is not in immediate danger, but rather when one is suffering the residue of that danger.

When talking about the way of arranging the practice of creative writing in the classroom, it is worth mentioning four stages of the creative writing process: ‘preparation (finding a theme, reviewing the style), incubation (ideas development, often in mind), illumination (ideas spring to life when least expected) and verification (a time for evaluation and revision [17]). Undoubtedly, for these processes students need time, so it will not work if a teacher asks students to write the whole story within one class. However, some shorter activities incorporating creative writing practices can be used during the class or even as warm-up activities.

For instance, while working with 3rd-year students specialized in Germanic and Romance Philology and Translation with English as their first foreign language, we can present some successful examples of creative writing activities:

“A life story in 6 words”. According to the example of Ernest Hemingway, students are asked to write their own life story consisting of only six words. Another option for developing translation skills can be added, i.e., translating each other’s life stories into Ukrainian. This activity can give deep insights as six words should contain the quintessence of the whole life experience.

“Haiku” or “Acrostic” poetry. Based on the topic of the lesson, students are asked to write simple poetry. It can also be a blank verse for those struggling to write rhymed verses. Some examples or patterns can be used as scaffolding tools to support those students who may find this task challenging.

“A same-letter sentence”. Another short creative writing activity is to write a sentence (or more depending upon the level or the available time) sentence about their past day/memory/feelings/recent experience where all words start with the same letter. Students may be given different letters or they can choose a letter by themselves. Besides, it can be a good idea to analyze the sentences from the point of view of such stylistic devices as alliteration and assonance.

Another group of creative writing activities can be based on some source text as a theme for speculation or inspiration:

“A story based on a news item”. Students may choose a news item and transform it into a short story of any genre. The same piece of news can be given by the teacher to all students with the specific genres assigned.

“A missing part”. This task is somehow limited as the original story is already given in the form of two extracts from some original novel or a short story. Students are supposed to write the part between the two extracts. It can be a good idea to pick up quite vague extracts in terms of the plot and characters, so students have many opportunities for imagination.

“A picture-based story”. Students are given a sequence of pictures (the number of details in the pictures can vary depending upon the level of students – the higher the level, the fewer details should be in the pictures). The task is to write a story based on these pictures, which act as a source of inspiration and ideas.

In order to create a full-length personal story, students will need more time. This process requires several preparation stages, additional explanations, and detailed role models. Christina Nichol describes this process in the following stages (each of the stages is a separate topic with a brief theory and multiple examples).

First, students are asked to think about their creative process, the way they generate ideas, and the sources of their inspiration. For this purpose, they can practice automatic writing like a stream of consciousness or free writing. They can also create mind maps for all of their ideas. After that, students should choose one of their memories and describe it. It can be something related to an object, a place, a person, or an event. Then the memoir is gradually transformed into a story by choosing the type of narration (1st, 2nd or 3rd person), adding details about the character (their fears and desires, possessions, and some unexpected details about their personalities), describing the conflicts (external and/or internal), providing vivid descriptions of the settings depending upon the character’s personality, developing dialogues and ornamenting the story with beautiful sentences making the reader literally feel, see, smell, taste the

same as the author does. Finally, writing the ending that can also vary depending on students’ preferences and the plot.

This process of creative writing with a ready product in the form of a story will take more time and effort, and cannot be taught within a regular class. It requires complex guidance from the teacher and the systematic work of students that can be a part of an extra-curricular course. However, this type of creative writing gives students more opportunities for self-expression and self-development, and possesses a more powerful potential for building resilience and healing traumatic experiences.

Conclusions and future prospects. Thus, having analyzed the potential of creative writing for building students’ resilience, we have come to the following conclusions. If we follow the ways of building resilience provided by APA, we can state that creative writing helps students make connections between their past experiences and their present-day influence. By transforming traumatic experiences into stories, students learn to deal with crises and accept dramatic changes in their lives more easily. Besides, by creating characters that are often associated with the students themselves, it is easier to build a brighter future for them giving them the power to take decisive actions and to move toward their goals by looking for opportunities for self-discovery. Then this positive view of oneself can be projected into real life thus nurturing a positive view of oneself. Creative writing can provide comic relief by reminding a person of his or her one’s unique observations and personal voice; in other words, one is taking back one’s own vision of the world that was stolen by him or her due to a traumatic situation. Moreover, by structuring thoughts, ideas, and emotions on paper it is much easier for students to keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook. In such a way, the complex effect of creative writing practice both inside and outside the classroom can greatly contribute to building students’ resilience and provide them with a self-regulation tool they can easily use even after their graduation.

In our further research, we are planning to study the whole process of writing a full-length story in detail taking into account the necessary work at each stage of creative writing and the presentation of the final product with feedback from other students and self-reflection.

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