



Genre-Mixing in Creative Writing

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Abstract

The concept of genre is central to teaching, learning and writing in a second language. Sometimes it makes things clearer and easier but at other times, it becomes restrictive in many ways. This appears to be the case in teaching creative writing in English to children from Asian background. In creative writing classes, one major challenge faced by the teacher is to make the students aware of things that sound/feel right in English at different levels of expression. For example the love of rhyme is still alive in Asian sub-cultures and prose English poetry seems drab and dry: for many it is difficult to appreciate that that the idea dominates the form in English. Also the concept of typical/dominant story is different in different cultures, despite common themes of love and war. In English, modern story and modern poetry have undergone complex changes. Many comparisons are, or can be, made between these concepts of what can/not be said in a story in modern English – for example the use of 'irony' at different levels of characters, plot, dialogue or description etc. And the use of rhythm rather than rhyme in English poetry is more important. But things thus translated cannot fully escape some 'oddity' of form- or feeling. It is necessary thus to undertake a comparison between, say, the genre of short 'story' in both English and Urdu to work out pedagogical concerns in a creative writing class in ESL. The present paper thus proposes to hold an inquiry into popular forms of story in Urdu and compares it with English, to work out and propose pedagogical implications of such investigation. It is assumed that genre-mixing from European and Asian cultural contexts may be a solution to creating blended identities in creative writing in English. Vijay Kumar Bhatia has written many books and articles about how the concept of genre(-mixing) is central to learning/teaching writing in English (Bhatia:1992, 1996, 1997, for example) in various academic domains. It might be a workable solution in creative writing classes.