



TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND CREATIVE WRITING: A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO TRANSFORMING TACIT KNOWLEDGE INTO CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Ioanna Tyrouⁱ

Special Teaching Staff,

Department of Italian Language and Literature,

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,

Greece

Postdoctoral Researcher,

(explicit and implicit knowledge in the educational

process with a focus on creative writing)

National Technical University of Athens,

Greece

Abstract:

This paper investigates the pedagogical potential of creative writing as a privileged space for the externalization and transformation of tacit knowledge. Drawing on classical and contemporary theories of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, Nonaka, Virtanen) and on epistemological approaches that view knowledge as embodied, emotional, and socially situated, the study argues that creative writing enables learners to transform pre-reflective, intuitive, and experiential forms of knowing into explicit, communicable meaning. Rather than treating creativity as a purely aesthetic outcome, the paper conceptualizes creative writing as a cognitive and emotional process through which tacit knowledge becomes visible, structured, and pedagogically meaningful. The study proposes a pedagogical model of Creative Tacit Externalization consisting of four interconnected stages: stimulus, free creative production, social exchange, and reflection-transformation. The model is theoretically aligned with Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI framework and illustrates how creative writing activates cyclical processes of socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization. Through metaphor, narrative construction, emotional recall, collaboration, and revision, learners engage in continuous tacit-explicit-tacit transformations that support both individual learning and collective knowledge creation. The paper further presents concrete classroom applications that demonstrate how creative writing practices foster self-awareness, empathy, linguistic development, and reflective thinking. Particular emphasis is placed on metaphorical thinking, memory narration, collaborative writing, and text revision as key mechanisms for accessing and reshaping tacit knowledge. In addition, the study outlines the development of qualitative research tools, such as text analysis protocols,

ⁱ Correspondence: email ioannatyrou@gmail.com

reflective journals, interviews, and evaluative rubrics, designed to capture indicators of tacit knowledge externalization in educational contexts. By positioning creative writing at the intersection of knowledge theory, creativity, and pedagogy, this study contributes a theoretically grounded and pedagogically applicable framework for understanding learning as a transformative process. It suggests that creative writing can play a central role in educational practices that seek to value experiential knowledge, deepen reflection, and promote meaningful and sustainable learning.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, creative writing pedagogy, externalization processes, metaphor and narrative, SECI model in education

1. Introduction

This paper examines the dynamic relationship between tacit knowledge and creativity, with particular emphasis on creative writing as a field where the two concepts interact and feed into each other. Based on classical and contemporary theories of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, Nonaka, Baumard, Virtanen), the study argues that creative writing is one of the most effective mechanisms for externalizing tacit knowledge, as it transforms experiences, emotions, pre-logical processes, and embodied experiences into explicit, communicable content. At the same time, it highlights how creativity functions as a process of transforming tacit knowledge into new forms of meaning, while the pedagogy of creative writing can utilize these theoretical foundations to enhance learning, self-awareness, and innovation.

The distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge is fundamental to contemporary epistemology and learning theory (Lejeune, 2011). From Polanyi to contemporary approaches to knowledge as a continuum (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998), tacit knowledge is recognized as the core of human understanding, judgment, and creative thinking (Silby & Watts, 2015; Virtanen, 2013; Baumard, 1996; Polanyi, 1969, 1966, 1964). In this context, creative writing emerges as a space where personal experience, imagination, and embodied knowledge are transformed into discourse, allowing the emergence and communication of internal processes that often remain unspoken. Furthermore, it reinforces creativity, language development, and emotional expression, functioning as an educational tool for personal and cultural empowerment. It promotes authentic speech production, critical thinking, and collaborative learning (Brauer, 2024; Tyrou, 2024; 2022; Bingol, 2023; Chen & Zhou, 2010).

Creative writing workshops, reflective journals, and collaborative activities, etc., are expected to create conditions where creative writing will activate processes of reflection, transfer, emotional processing, and social interaction, allowing students to transform personal, unspoken experiences into explicit speech. For this reason, a four-stage pedagogical model is proposed to enhance and externalize tacit knowledge through creative writing.

2. Conceptual and Epistemological Framework

2.1 Tacit Knowledge as the Foundation of Human Experience

Tacit knowledge is a fundamental dimension of human understanding and includes emotions, intuitions, embodied skills, and pre-logical processes that are difficult to express explicitly. Polanyi (1966) argues that "*we know more than we can say*", pointing out that human knowledge is based on a substrate of unconscious processes that guide judgment and action. Virtanen (2013) expands on this position, emphasizing that tacit knowledge is not a separate category but a dimension of every act of understanding: all explicit knowledge presupposes a network of unspoken cognitive and emotional processes that function as its invisible background.

2.2 Externalization of Tacit Knowledge

The conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit form, the process of externalization, is a critical stage in the creation of new knowledge. In Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model, externalization is achieved through narration, transfer, symbolization, examples, and reflection. These mechanisms allow people to convert internal, often unspoken experiences into words, images, and semantic structures that can be shared and reflected upon. This process is not merely linguistic; it is deeply cognitive and emotional, as it requires the individual to retrieve, organize, and transform elements of their internal experience.

2.3 Creativity and Tacit Knowledge

Creativity is based on unconscious connections, pre-logical processes, emotional memory, embodied experience, and intuitive judgment, elements that belong to the realm of tacit knowledge. The creative act acts as a bridge between the unspoken and the spoken, allowing the creator to transform internal experiences into new meanings. Creativity is not simply the production of originality; it is a process of transforming tacit knowledge into forms that can be expressed, communicated, and reflected upon.

2.4 Creative Writing and Externalization of Tacit Knowledge

Creative writing activates various processes directly related to tacit knowledge: metaphorical thinking, narration of personal experiences, emotional processing, embodied memory, and social interaction. Through these processes, tacit knowledge acquires form, structure, and linguistic substance. Creative writing functions not only as a means of expression, but also as a mechanism of cognitive transformation, where the tacit becomes explicit and the explicit, through revision and reflection, returns as new tacit knowledge.

3. Towards a Model of “*Creative Externalization*” of Tacit Knowledge

Creative writing can be seen as a multi-level process of transforming tacit knowledge, which is aligned with Nonaka and Takeuchi’s SECI model (1995). The production, review, and communication of a creative text activate successive stages of socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization, allowing tacit knowledge to take explicit form and then be reincorporated as new, enriched tacit knowledge. However, this process is not linear; it operates cyclically and dynamically, as each stage feeds into and is influenced by the next. In the *Socialization* stage, students share experiences, images, emotions, and narrative practices through discussions, workshops, and group activities. This exchange creates a common substrate of tacit knowledge, where personal experience meets collective memory. In the *Externalization* stage, tacit knowledge is transformed into explicit knowledge through writing, metaphor, narration, and symbolic thinking. Creative writing acts as a mechanism for crystallizing internal processes, allowing students to give form to what has not been said.

In the *Combination* stage, the text is revised, organized, and enriched with writing techniques, structure, and narrative choices. Explicit knowledge is combined, restructured, and given coherence. Finally, in the *Internalization* stage, writing techniques and experiences are integrated as new forms of tacit knowledge: the student develops a personal style, a deeper understanding of the process, and an increased ability to express themselves.

Table 1: Tacit Knowledge Creative Externalization Model

Stage	Tacit-Explicit	Creative Writing
Socialization	tacit → tacit	exchange of experiences, workshops, discussions
Externalization	tacit → explicit	writing, metaphors, narration
Combination	explicit → explicit	revision, structure, writing techniques
Internalization	explicit → tacit	integration of techniques, development of personal style

The table summarizes the cyclical transformation of tacit knowledge through creative writing practices.

Through this sequence of stages, creative writing functions as a space where tacit knowledge takes shape, is restructured, and ultimately returns to the creator as new understanding and personal development. The “*Creative Externalization*” model highlights that writing is not simply an artistic activity, but a cognitive and emotional process where experience is transformed into meaning.

Creative writing, through this sequence of stages, functions as a space where unspoken knowledge takes shape, is restructured, and ultimately returns to the creator as new understanding and personal development. The “*Creative Externalization*” model highlights that writing is not simply an artistic activity, but a cognitive and emotional process where experience is transformed into meaning.

4. Proposed Creative Tacit Externalization Model

Based on the theoretical principles of tacit knowledge and the function of creative writing, a four-phase model of pedagogical use of writing for the externalization of tacit knowledge is proposed. This model combines individual and collective processes and allows knowledge to circulate, transform, and be rewritten in the student's personal repertoire.

The first stage, *Stimulus*, activates embodied memory and emotional recall. Images, sounds, objects, smells, or personal memories act as triggers that bring unspoken experiences to the surface. The stimulus does not function as an instruction but as an invitation to access deeper layers of experience.

In the second stage, *Free Creative Production*, the student writes without restrictions, logical organization, or evaluative criteria. Free writing activates associative pathways, allows pre-logical thoughts to emerge, and gives space to emotional memory. At this stage, tacit knowledge begins to acquire linguistic substance.

The third stage, *Social Exchange*, consists of discussion, collaborative writing, and feedback. Interaction with other students creates communal tacit knowledge: shared metaphors, shared patterns, unspoken agreements about style and meaning. The group acts as a mirror, allowing the student to see their own tacit knowledge through others' eyes.

The fourth stage, *Reflection and Transformation*, involves revising the text and deepening understanding. The editing process functions as an explicit-tacit-explicit cycle: writing techniques are gradually incorporated, transformed into automated skills, and contribute to the development of personal style. The student recognizes what they have learned, how they have changed, and how writing has transformed their experience.

The Creative Tacit Externalization model highlights creative writing as a process of learning, self-awareness, and transformation. Through the four stages, tacit knowledge becomes visible, expressible, and ultimately reintegrated as a new form of understanding and creativity.

5. Creation of a Research Tool

To investigate the relationship between creative writing and tacit knowledge, multiple data sources can be used to develop specialized tools to enhance the validity of the research:

- analysis of student texts,
- semi-structured interviews,
- observation of participatory interaction,
- reflective journals.

In this way, we could answer key research questions related to how tacit knowledge manifests itself in students' creative writing, what externalization processes

activate it, how collaborative writing enhances the social dimension of tacit knowledge, and so on.

It would be necessary to create a rubric for evaluating creative writing as an externalization of tacit knowledge. This could include criteria for metaphorical thinking, emotional processing, originality, depth of reflection, narrative coherence, or indications of tacit explicit transformation. Each criterion is accompanied by descriptive levels (1-4), observation indicators, and examples.

Furthermore, a questionnaire that students could complete is also necessary for conducting research in order to explore the experience of creative writing, the sense of externalizing personal experiences, the perception of learning, the function of collaboration, and the change in self-perception. Finally, there is also the protocol for analyzing student texts. Useful categories include metaphors, symbols, emotional references, but also reflection, narrative choices, and indications of tacit knowledge. The protocol process requires coding, thematic analysis, cross-coding, and interpretation.

The main goal in creating research tools is to detect and record findings on metaphorical meaning, narration as personal memory, social interaction and collaborative writing, and finally, text revision. In other words, metaphors, as carriers of tacit knowledge, serve to express feelings that could not be described literally. For example, *"My sadness was a window that only looked inward"*, *"It was like holding a cup that still smelled like childhood Sundays"*, or *"It was a blanket that had retained its warmth"*.

Also, narrative activates personal memory, functioning as a mechanism for bringing unspoken experiences to the surface, as students can remember and retrieve memories they thought were lost or find solutions they already know, unraveling threads that have not been cut after all. Furthermore, collaborative writing can strengthen community tacit knowledge. Groups can develop common patterns, common images, and common narrative strategies. Tacit understanding develops because the group begins to "know" things without having said them explicitly. A common way of thinking develops, a shared sense of what is considered important, beautiful, right, or effective, and unwritten rules are shared, where people learn from each other through the process, not from instructions. Ultimately, common thinking becomes deeper, richer, and more coordinated.

At last, text revision leads to the transformation of tacit knowledge. The editing process functions as an explicit-tacit-explicit cycle, reinforcing the internalization of techniques and the development of personal style. On the one hand, the internalization of techniques is reinforced, as the more texts are edited, the fewer techniques are "rules" and the more they become automated choices. On the other hand, personal style also evolves. Through this cycle, writing acquires its own voice, and techniques become part of your creative identity. Therefore, revision is a learning process where your experience becomes knowledge, knowledge becomes skill, and skill becomes style.

6. Classroom Applications

Cultivating creative writing in the classroom can serve as a bridge between students' explicit and tacit knowledge. Through targeted activities, students learn to recognize, express, and transform experiences, emotions, and unspoken skills. The following applications are organized into four areas: externalization of tacit knowledge, collaborative writing, reflection, and use of technology.

6.1 Tacit Knowledge Externalization Exercises

The activities in this category aim to help students bring to the surface experiences and emotions that usually remain unspoken.

- **Memory narration without logical coherence:** writing about a memory exactly as it appears in the mind, without attempting to organize it chronologically or logically. For example, a student might describe fragmented images from a summer: *"the orange light on the balcony"*, *"the smell of sunscreen"*, *"my sister's laughter"*. The exercise activates physical and emotional memory, and tacit knowledge becomes writing material.
- **Metaphorical autobiography:** writing about their life story through a metaphor, e.g. *"my life as a garden that changes seasons"*. The metaphor acts as a tool for accessing deeper experiences that are difficult to express directly.
- **Writing a story from an image that evokes emotion:** an image is presented (e.g., an empty room, a child dancing, a grandmother cooking) and participants are asked to write a story based on the emotion it evokes. The image acts as a trigger for unspoken emotions.

6.2 Collaborative Creative Writing

Collaboration strengthens the sense of community and allows students to see how each person's tacit knowledge enriches the collective creation.

- **Story circle:** writing a paragraph and then passing the text on to the next person, who continues the story. The process reveals how different internal logics and narrative habits come together in a shared project.
- **Group character creation:** collaborating to *"build"* a character: one person gives the name, another the past, another the desires, and another the fears. The activity shows how each person's personal experience is transformed into narrative material.
- **Peer feedback with an emphasis on emotion:** commenting on classmates' texts not as *"critics"* but as readers who share what they felt: *"This image made me feel..."*, *"It touched me because it reminded me of..."*. In this way, they recognize the emotional dimension of writing.

6.3 Reflection

Reflection helps us become aware of how we write, what we learn, and how writing transforms us.

- **Journal- "What did I learn about myself through writing?":** At the end of each unit, students are asked to write a few lines about what they discovered about themselves through the process. This may involve feelings, difficulties, new techniques, or changes in their way of thinking.
- **Discussion on how stories conceal unspoken knowledge:** the class discusses how personal stories contain values, fears, desires, and experiential wisdom that are not directly expressed. Students learn to recognize the "*underlying current*" of the narrative.

6.4 Utilization of Technology

Technology can serve as a tool for encouraging creativity and the externalization of tacit knowledge.

- **Digital writing workshops:** collaborative writing platforms allow students to work on the same text simultaneously, comment, revise, and see the evolution of their writing.
- **Recording oral narratives:** record an oral story before writing it down. Orality often reveals spontaneity, rhythm, and emotional nuances that are not immediately apparent in written form.
- **Use images/sounds as stimuli:** sounds (such as rain, city noises, the sea) or images can serve as a starting point for stories that activate the imagination and emotional memory.

In this final section, the main findings are concisely reiterated. Only conclusions supported by the study findings should be included.

7. Discussion

This study highlights that creative writing functions as the primary field for transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, while simultaneously producing new tacit knowledge through the experience of writing, confirming the close relationship between experiential learning, linguistic expression, and cognitive development. This process is directly linked to the SECI model, as the creative process activates mechanisms of socialization, externalization, combination and internalization, allowing students to transform pre-logical, emotional and embodied experiences into explicit discourse. Metaphorical thinking, memory narration, and collaborative writing emerge as key carriers of tacit knowledge, confirming that knowledge is cognitive but also emotional and social.

At the same time, the analysis shows that creative writing enhances self-awareness and empathy, as students recognize their internal processes and share them with others. The collaborative dimension of writing creates shared meanings and unspoken

agreements, which constitute forms of communal tacit knowledge. Furthermore, the revision process proves critical to the development of personal style, as writing techniques gradually become automated and integrated skills. Overall, creative writing is not just a means of expression. It is also a dynamic learning context where tacit knowledge becomes visible, transformed, and reintegrated, enhancing students' cognitive, emotional, and social development.

8. Methodological Limitations- Future Research Directions

A primary limitation of the present study is its predominantly theoretical and conceptual nature. Although the proposed Creative Tacit Externalization Model is based on well-established epistemological and pedagogical frameworks, it has not yet been empirically tested through large-scale or longitudinal studies. By definition, tacit knowledge resists direct observation and quantification. Although the study proposes qualitative tools such as text analysis, reflective journals as well as interviews, interpreting tacit knowledge indicators is inherently subjective and dependent on the researcher's analytical framework. Analyzing creative texts as manifestations of tacit knowledge requires interpretive and qualitative approaches. Even with the use of coding schemes and analytical protocols, it is impossible to guarantee complete objectivity, since meaning is co-constructed by both the writer and the researcher.

Future research could explore the Creative Tacit Externalization model through classroom-based interventions, allowing us to observe how each stage of the process (stimulus, free production, social exchange, and reflection) contributes to the gradual transformation of tacit knowledge. Mixed-method research designs could strengthen the reliability of future studies by combining qualitative text analysis with questionnaires, self-assessment scales, and learning outcome measures, enabling meaningful triangulation.

Longitudinal studies would also be valuable for examining how repeated engagement with creative writing practices shapes the development of personal style, self-awareness, and the internalization of writing techniques as forms of tacit knowledge. Another promising direction involves investigating how the externalization of tacit knowledge through creative writing varies across cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts, particularly in multilingual or foreign language learning environments. Finally, further research could consider the role of digital platforms, multimodal stimuli, and emerging AI-assisted writing tools in facilitating, or potentially reshaping the ways in which tacit knowledge becomes externalized within creative writing processes.

9. Conclusions

The study demonstrates that tacit knowledge is an integral part of human learning and that creative writing offers a unique framework for its externalization and transformation. Through metaphors, narratives, emotional images, and collaborative

processes, students transform lived and embodied experiences into explicit language while developing new forms of understanding. Creative writing acts as a bridge between the unspoken and the spoken, between the externalization of tacit knowledge and the development of creativity, enhancing self-awareness, empathy, language development, and critical thinking.

The pedagogical use of creative writing can contribute significantly to the formation of learning environments that recognize the importance of experiential knowledge and promote creativity and innovation. We suggest systematically incorporating creative writing workshops into the school curriculum, as well as developing assessment tools that take into account metaphorical thinking, emotional processing, and tacit knowledge cues. The link between theory and practice proposed in the study can serve as a basis for future research and applications in a variety of educational contexts.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Ioanna Th. Tyrou holds a B.A. in Italian and Spanish Literature, a B.A. in Primary Education, an M.A. in ICT, and a PhD in Educational Technology and Didactics. Since 2017, she has been a Special Teaching Staff member at the Department of Italian Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She specializes in creative writing in foreign languages, the pedagogical use of digital technologies, and language learning through digital media. Her postdoctoral research focuses on knowledge management in education (the explicit and implicit knowledge during the educational process in students, with the aim of creative writing). She has extensive teaching experience, publications, and contributions to curriculum design in ICT-enhanced language teaching.

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