


Vietnamese Students' Creative Writing by Creating Images

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Citation: Quynh, D. T. and Tri, H. D. (2025). Vietnamese Students' Creative Writing by Creating Images, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i1.328>

Published: September 30, 2025

ABSTRACT

Creativity is increasingly valued in higher education for its role in enhancing learner engagement and cognitive development. This study explores image-based creative writing as a pedagogical method to foster students' creativity in a Vietnamese university context. Using a four-step action research framework (plan, act, observe, reflect), the study was conducted with 182 students enrolled in a supplementary skills course. After guided instruction, over 55% of participants successfully produced visual-textual compositions, encompassing 23 distinct image types such as hearts, clocks, arrows, houses, and symbolic forms like the sun and earth. A post-activity survey revealed strong student support for the approach, with many highlighting its emotional resonance, novelty, and potential for self-expression. These findings suggest that integrating visual-symbolic composition into writing instruction not only promotes creative thinking but also provides students with multimodal tools to articulate personal meaning. The study contributes to broader discussions on multimodal literacy and affective pedagogy in non-Western educational settings, offering practical implications for curriculum innovation in contexts where creativity is often constrained by standardized formats.

Keywords: language, creative writing, image creating, image writing, picture

INTRODUCTION

In modern higher education, creativity has become an important foundation, encouraged through changes in teaching methods, digital learning tools as well as education policies. Referring to the global trend, students are increasingly expected to consume not merely knowledge, but also to produce expressive, original forms of self-performance (Barnett, 2020). In this broad cultural and social context, creative writing has been considered not only as an artistic practice but also as a way of helping students improve their communication skills, building their personal identity and visual-textual abilities in an image-overwhelmed age (McRobbie, 2009; Banet-Weiser, 2016; Wilson, 2019).

This paper examines a new teaching method used at a university in Vietnam, where students were asked to create creative writing based on images. In these writings, the words are carefully arranged in visual shapes, not just written in lines like traditional text. This activity is situated within STEAM education and reflects a cultural belief that creativity is an important part of learning and personal development (Reckwitz, 2002). While poets and scholars in the past considered visual poems or picture writing mainly as artistic or language experiments (Apollinaire, 1918; Finch, 1998), there have been few studies on how to guide students to create such visual writing so that it can reflect their sense of self, their ability to express ideas, and how they learn in today's university environment.

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the image-based creative writing model (see the model below) by examining which cultural symbols (images) are generated by higher education students and how this form of creative writing conveys the student's aspirational identity within the context of Vietnamese higher education. These questions frame our analysis of both the image-based products created by students and their reflections on this creative writing process. We argue that image-based creative writing is not just a way for students to express themselves artistically. It also creates a meaningful environment where they could freely show what they have learned and how they are growing as individuals, especially in today's education system, which has increasing emphasis on visual learning.

Literature Review

In recent years, the STEAM education model has gained widespread attention among educators and researchers worldwide. One important part of STEAM, which is art, is now recognized as an indispensable element of modern education (Yakman, 2010). Supporting this viewpoint, Wang (2019) emphasized the powerful role of aesthetics in fostering creativity, arguing that "aesthetic experience" stimulates emotion and creativity, which in turn contributes to personal growth (p. 110). Similarly, Yu and Liu (2022) concluded that art and creativity help connect different types of knowledge, thereby enhancing the depth, breadth and integrity of learning.

Creative writing has played a vital role in current education trends, contributing to pedagogical innovation, particularly in field of language teaching. Maslow (1970) believed that creativity is a fundamental skill necessary for learning and self-actualization. Similarly, Dawson (2005) said that the goal of creative writing in schools is to help children grow through self-expression, unlocking their creative potential. At the university level, the importance of creative writing becomes more important. May (2007) argued that teaching creative writing in higher education helps students develop their thinking skills, and encourages them to think in a systematical way. This, in turn, enhances the overall quality of their academic performance and learning outcomes.

When referring to creative writing, authors mainly focused on conventional literary forms such as poetry, short stories, and playwriting (Hyland, 2002; Kroll, 2003; Harmer, 2007; Bennett, 2008; Maley, 2009; Pawliczak, 2015; Pedersen and Haynes, 2019; Maley, 2018; Rosenhan and Galloway, 2019; Banegas and Lowe, 2021; Alwasilah, 2024; Shuangyun, 2021). However, creative writing is not limited to traditional text, it also includes more experimental and visual styles, particularly in the works of poets such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos, and Mary Ellen Solt. These poets are known for producing visual poetry or concrete poetry, where words are carefully arranged to create visual images, combining both art and literature. Apollinaire (1918) was a pioneering figure in this field with his collection *Calligrammes*, a collection of poems in which text formed images, thus enriching the poem's aesthetic and interpretive meaning. Inspired by this, Brazilian poets Haroldo and Augusto de Campos developed visually striking compositions that contributed to the introduction of such new way of writing poetry. Similarly, Solt (1964) made a strong impact with her collection *Flowers in Concrete*, where she carefully arranged words/letters to form the shapes of different flowers. These creative forms of writing marked a breakthrough in poetic creativity.

Later on, several educators explored how visual poetry could be applied in education (Marshall, 1974; Finch 1998; Quynh, 2023; Stylianidou, 2018). Marshall (1974) made significant contributions to the field of education and has been recognized in the UK and worldwide for her methodological innovation. She became a famous educator with creative and effective teaching methods and advocated the use of visual poetry in classes.

Finch (1998) further advanced the application of visual poetry in education by introducing the concept and practice of "picture poems". He developed a theoretical framework categorizing three distinct types of picture poems and introduced them into classroom activities, allowing students to read and reflect on these visually structured texts. While this activity highlighted the motivational impact of visual poetry, it mainly focused on showing and discussing visual poems, rather than teaching students how to create their own.

Based on Finch's framework, Quynh (2023) applied the theory of picture poems to English creative writing activity through a clear and structured teaching method. In her action research study, Quynh introduced a five-step creative writing model designed to guide high school students in composing image-based texts using their own words and poetic expressions. This model helped students create creative and visually unique works, called image writings or picture poems. However, the visual outputs in Quynh's study were often reproductions of pre-existing images provided by the teacher, rather than student-generated visuals. To address this limitation, the current study proposes a six-step creative writing model that guide students to create both the text and the images themselves. This model aims to deepen creative autonomy and encourage them to express their own ideas in visual writing.


Importantly, this direction resonates with the process-based assessment of multimodal composing proposed by Hafner and Ho (2020), as well as the genre-based rubric design of Jiang et al. (2022), both of which stress that students' creative products should be evaluated not only for outcomes but also for their developmental processes and contextual meaning.

In addition, Tan (2023) emphasized that when students move from traditional writing to multimodal composing, their cognitive processes change: visual prompts often serve as idea generators, scaffolding textual structuring. This insight strongly supports the “image outlining → brainstorming → image constructing” stages in our model. Similarly, Xu (2023) provided evidence that digital multimodal composing can improve learners’ overall L2 writing performance, reinforcing the claim that image-based writing enhances both engagement and output quality. Huang and Xia (2024) further extend this argument by demonstrating that multimodal composing prepares learners for digitally mediated academic communication, linking classroom tasks with broader communicative practices. Zuo and He (2024) highlighted how DMC mediates learner voice and power relations, a crucial consideration for situating Vietnamese students’ symbolic choices within broader socio-cultural dynamics. Zhang and Yu (2024) stressed the role of self-assessment in multimodal composing, which speaks to students’ sense of autonomy and motivation observed in our survey data.

Key Concepts

Among various definitions of creativity, those proposed by Marshall (1974) and Dawson (2005) are particularly relevant to this study. Marshall argues that creativity is the ability to create one’s own symbols of experience, highlighting the personal meaning behind creative work. Dawson (2005) characterizes creativity as “the ability to create; to produce something new and original”; which leads to “innovative changes to anything which is routine or mechanistic” with its products are “the unique expression of each individual” (Dawson, 2005, p. 22). These perspectives underscore creativity as both a transformative and deeply personal process.

Creative writing, according to Marshall (1974), is “the use of written language to conceptualize, explore and record experience in such a way as to create a unique symbolization” (p. 10). From Marshall’s perspective, the medium of creative writing is the written language, the content is people’s experience, and the result is a unique symbolization. In agreeing with Marshall’s viewpoint, Dawson (2004) states that “creative writing does not need to refer specifically to literary works, but can refer to any writing which is creative” (p. 91). Similarly to Marshall’s concept, Finch (1998) mentions creative writing as a picture poem, which is as a non-grammar-structure writing with carefully arranged words to make a shape. Finch characterized three types of picture poems as follows:

Type 1: a shape	Type 2: a shape frame	Type 3: stylized letters
<p>A house can be tall, short, wide or thin with many rooms, or only a few. it can be home for all the family or simply me and my pets</p>		<p>WAY OUT →</p>

(Finch, 1998, pp. 29-45)

According to Finch, the first type features words arranged to form a shape, while the second consists of a shaped frame in which words are organized to outline that shape. Both types integrate meaning and visual form, combining textual content with a thoughtfully organized visual form. The third type refers to the letters which are arranged to form a word/phrase, with the resulting image suggesting action rather than conveying a specific shape or semantic meaning. From our perspective, this third type does not qualify as a picture poem, as it is constructed from individual letters rather than words or lines of poetry. Based on Finch’s framework, this study focuses on the first two types of image writing, which we refer to as image-based creative writing, having these characteristics:

In image-based creative writing, words and sentences are intentionally arranged to form a visual representation of the subject, with the image itself reflecting the topic or title of the piece.

The language used in such writings is often simple, and repetition of words or phrases is commonly employed to fulfill artistic aims. Additionally, grammatical structures are not strictly required, allowing students greater freedom to experiment with language. This flexibility supports creativity in both visual presentation and meaning, enabling learners to express ideas in innovative and engaging ways. For example:

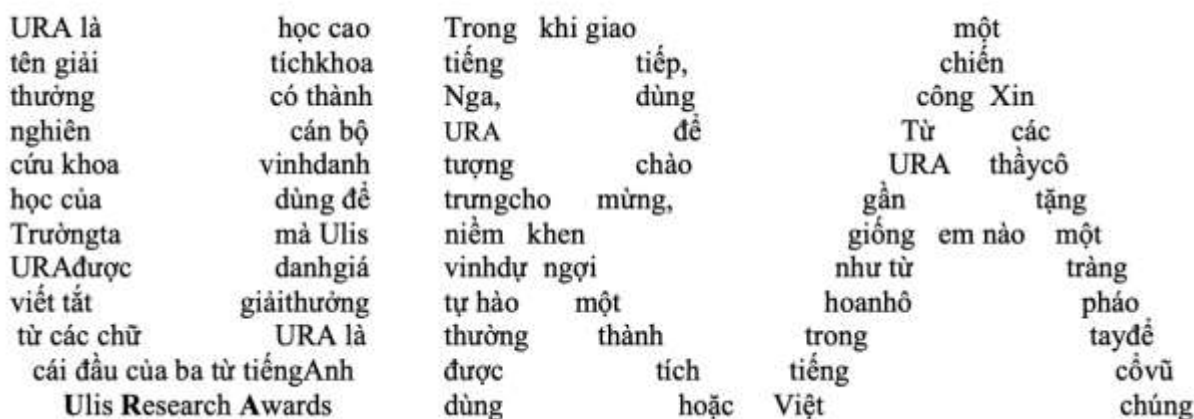


Figure 1. Picture writing of the letter URA.

The example above demonstrates image-based creative writing as the visual representation “URA” is constructed using words, the topic of the image writing is “URA” and the content is a paragraph describing the meaning of the letter URA. The language used in the above image writing is simple and sometimes does not follow standard grammar.

The example above demonstrates image-based creative writing, as the visual representation (“URA”) is constructed using words. In this case, “URA” is both the picture and the main topic, and the text inside explains what “URA” means. The language used in the piece is simple and, at times, breaks grammatical rules to match the visual design.

RESEARCH METHOD

Action research: in this study, the action research methodology developed by Clark et al. (2020) was applied to guide students in the process of creating image-based writing. According to Clark et al., action research enables educators to transform pedagogical concepts into practical strategies, thereby, enhancing student engagement and improving learning outcomes. Within the context of creative writing, the application of a single action research cycle is appropriate for exploratory investigations. Also, the participants are students at a language-focused university rather than an art institution, it is understandably challenging for them to produce multiple image-based writing tasks within a limited timeframe.

The four key stages (plan-act-observe-reflect) in an action research cycle developed by Clark et al. (2020) are as follows:

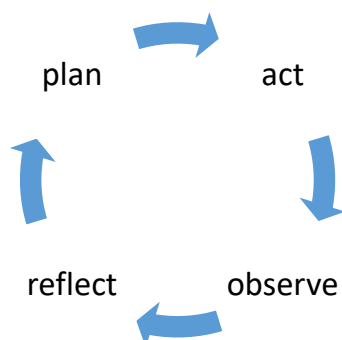


Figure 2. Action research cycle developed by Clark et al. (2020).

To implement the action research with the mentioned purpose, both survey and data analysis methods were employed. The survey method was used with the purpose of surveying learners’ attitudes towards this activity. The

data analysis method was applied to analyze the survey results and analyze the characteristics and distribution of visual elements in students' creative writings.

Participants and contexts of the study: The study involved 182 undergraduate students from various faculties at a University of Languages in Hanoi, Vietnam. All participants were enrolled in the course Supplementary Skills during the 2024 academic year. There were no specific selection criteria for participation, as the students were randomly divided into five groups by the university's Training Department and Student Affairs Office. Supplementary Skills is a compulsory course designed to develop students' soft skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, emotional regulation, teamwork, creativity, and communication. The course is delivered in both Vietnamese and English, and students are typically required to write reflections after each lesson. To enhance the reflective writing component, students were encouraged to express their reflections in a visually creative manner. Each student was asked to produce one piece of image-based creative writing on a topic of their choice. They were permitted to write in either the languages they are studying or their mother language, and they could consider a range of themes, including university life, faculty-related topics, academic experiences, career aspirations, personal well-being, and other areas of their interest.

Additionally, the instructor participant in this study was the author, who was responsible for teaching the Supplementary Skills course, as well as providing guidance and feedback on students' creative writing assignments. The instructor has served as an English language lecturer for over 25 years and as a lecturer in soft skills education for 9 years at a University of Foreign Languages in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The research instruments employed in this study comprised student-produced written documents and a survey questionnaire. The survey consisted of four items: two multiple-choice questions designed to collect specific responses, and two open-ended questions that allowed students to freely express their opinions about the teaching method. This survey was designed to help understand how well the image-based creative writing method worked and to learn what students thought.

Data Collection: students' written works and questionnaire responses were collected and managed using Google Drive and Google Forms, following these steps:

Step 1: After having collected students' writings from Google Drive, the questionnaire was delivered via Google Form to all five groups of participants.

Step 2: Having confirmed all questionnaires have been completed, data collection, classification, and storage processes were conducted.

Step 3: After the data were organized and stored, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed.

Quantitative analysis: Students' written works and survey responses were statistically analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were calculated, which ranked issues. These analyses facilitated the assessment of students' progress in creative writing and provided insight into their attitudes toward the activity.

Qualitative analysis: Content analysis was employed to examine the characteristics of the creative writings and students' attitudes. This qualitative analysis helped identify the main features within the texts and images, thereby enhancing understanding of students' creative abilities and their perceptions of the image-based writing activity.

Research design: This study employed the action research methodology, developed by Clark et al. (2020), following a four-stage process:

Stage 1- Planning (Preparations):

The instructor introduced key concepts related to creative writing and provided students with guidelines to compose their own works using a six-step creative writing model, which was adapted from Quynh (2023). Building on prior research that emphasizes the advantage of positioning the image before the text in creative outcomes (Yu and Liu, 2022), the proposed model added an additional step - image outlining - prior to the brainstorming step (see the six-step model below). This modification aimed to help students create their own images as part of their creative writing. Also, some creative writing topics were suggested to help students choose ideas and images that matched their interests. The six-step creative writing model involving image creation is presented as follows:

The Six-Step Creative Writing Model

Step 1- Topic selection: Students are encouraged to select a topic they wish to explore through their writing. For instance, a student might choose to describe an object related to their study.

Step 2- Image selection: In this step, students select an image they intend to create. This step is important because the chosen image will inspire both the image itself and the content that makes up the image. For example, if a student chooses to write about a study-related object, they might decide to create an image of a computer.

Step 3- Image outlining: Students sketch the basic outline of their selected image such as the shape of a computer on paper. This first sketch gives a basic shape to help students arrange their words and build the final image. For example:

RESULTS

The following tables present key findings from creative writing work of 182 students:

Table 1. The key results of creative writing

Writings	Number	Ratio
Writings with image	104	57,14%
Writings without image	7	3,85%
No submission	71	39,01%
Total	182	100%

Table 2. The distribution of images from 104 creative writings

Ordinal	Images	Total	Ratio
1	Letter	36	34,61%
2	House	13	12,50%
3	Number	11	10,58%
4	Tree	9	8,65%
5	arrow	5	4,81%
6	computer	4	3,85%
7	diamond	4	3,85%
8	animal	3	2,88%
9	book	2	1,92%
10	heart	2	1,92%
11	woman	2	1,92%
12	coffee cup	2	1,92%
13	clock	1	0,96%
14	tower	1	0,96%
15	music note	1	0,96%
16	earth	1	0,96%
17	ball	1	0,96%
18	flower	1	0,96%
19	jar	1	0,96%
20	mountain	1	0,96%
21	star	1	0,96%
22	sun	1	0,96%
23	triangle	1	0,96%
Total	23 types of images	104	100%

As shown in **Table 1**, more than half of the students were able to produce creative writing in the form of visual imagery. Specifically, out of 182 students, 104 (57.14%) submitted creative works that included images. In contrast, 7 students (3.85%) submitted written pieces without any visual elements, consisting only of paragraphs, while 71 students (39.01%) did not submit any creative writing. These findings suggest that the action research approach used in the image-based creative writing activity was effective in fostering student engagement and output.

As illustrated in **Table 2**, letter images were the most frequently produced, with 36 images, representing approximately 35% of all images, followed by images of houses, numbers, trees, arrows, computers, and diamonds. **Table 2** also shows that the least frequent image types, each appearing only once and accounting for less than 1% of the total, were music notes, the Earth, a ball, a curtain, a flower, a jar, a mountain, a star, the sun, and a triangle. Taken together, the results presented in **Table 1** and **Table 2** indicate that the application of the six-step creative writing model effectively supported students' ability to produce creative writing work.

In addition to analyzing students' performance in image-based creative writing, a survey was also conducted to collect students' perceptions of the activity. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of student interest, the benefits and limitations of the activity from the students' perspective. All 182 students who participated in the study responded to the survey. The survey results are summarized as follows:

The first question in the survey was a multiple choice question exploring how students like this approach, which consists of two options: *Like* and *Don't like*. The answer was shown in the following chart:

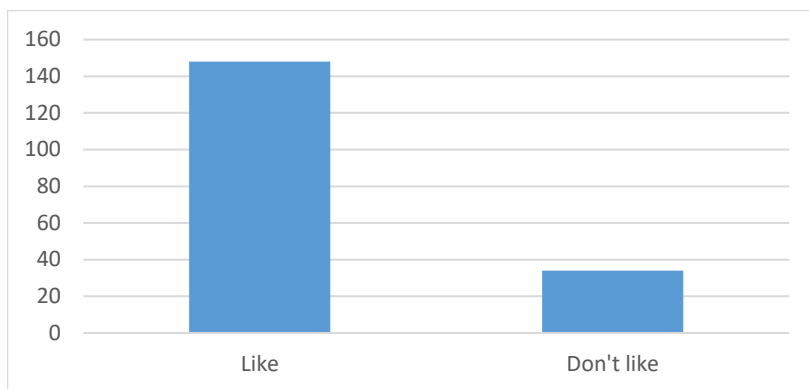


Figure 5. Students' interest in creative writing.

As illustrated in the chart, the majority of students responded positively to the activity, with 148 out of 182 students (81%) selecting the *Like* option, while 34 students (19%) selected *Don't like*. These results indicate that most students showed a strong interest in the image-based creative writing activity, suggesting its effectiveness in engaging learners.

Following the initial multiple-choice question, students were asked to explain for their choice by explaining why they liked or did not like the image-based creative writing activity. Many different ideas were gathered from their written explanations. Students who expressed a positive attitude toward the activity noted that it stimulated their creativity and enhanced their imagination. Many students liked the new approach and said it was different from the usual writing tasks they had done before. They reported enjoying the freedom to express themselves without being limited by strict rules, and they found the process of creating visual representations engaging and rewarding. Several students also said their final products were nice to look at and made a good impression. And here are some of their answers.

"The thing I like in this activity was that we had a chance to write a picture with words, which I hadn't done before" (Student 166)

"I like it because it is creative" (Student 03)

"Because I can express my imagination" (Student 72)

"This activity gave me a new experience in writing" (Student 151)

"As the name of the activity itself, creative writing is an opportunity for me to write down my own new ideas, which I have never thought of before. I can incorporate a lot of rich content through just one image" (Student 58)

Besides, some students who could not even give a creative writing also persuasively explained why they liked this activity. One said "*I have a chance to look at my friends' creative works, which was so wonderful*" (Student 175). Another added, "*I am not confident in my artistic and creative abilities so I can't give an image, but I like this activity*" (student 04). Some did not like the activity reasoned that "*It's difficult to create a pic by words and I have no ideas.*" (Student 117).

The third question in the survey was a multiple choice referring to the difficulty of this approach from students' perspective, which consists of four options: *Very difficult*, *Difficult*, *Not very difficult* and *Easy*. The answers were shown in the following chart:

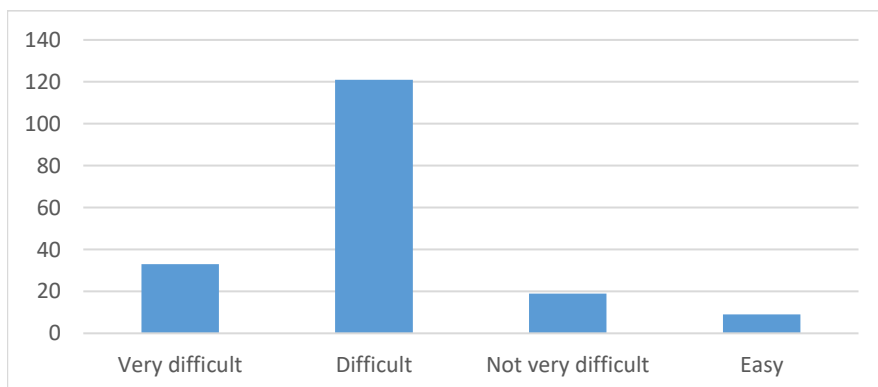


Figure 6. The difficulty of creative writing.

As shown in **Figure 6**, the majority of students perceived the creative writing activity involving image creation as challenging. Specifically, 121 out of 182 students (66.5%) selected *Difficult*, 33 students (18.1%) selected *Very Difficult*, 19 students (10.4%) selected *Not Very Difficult*, and only 9 students (4.9%) considered the activity *Easy*. These results clearly indicate that, from the students' perspective, creative writing by generating images is a demanding task. Students who found the activity difficult explained that it required significant creativity, idea generation, time, effort, and cognitive processing. For example, one student stated, *"this activity is difficult for me because I have to think deeply and connect ideas to make an image, and do not have ideas of which image I can create"* (Student 137). Another student noted *"My ideas are still limited and my creativity is not good. I feel that each creative writing takes me a lot of time to complete"* (Student 16). Similarly, another participant emphasized, *"time, ideas and creativity are very important if we want to produce a picture writing"* (Student 168). Besides, some students described the task as very difficult. Explaining to this, one said *"Creativity requires talent. If we don't have talent, we can't do it"* (Student 75), another explained, *"I can write a good paragraph, but we can't build an image because I find it very hard to imagine something"* (Student 32). However, one noticeable discovery about the survey is that there was a percentage of 10.4% of students believed creative writing activity was not very difficult. These students felt confident in their ability to create images and understood the process well. One student mentioned *"everyone can shape an image"* (Student 11). Another reasoned *"because creativity is unlimited, so I can freely create my own works without any pressure"* (Student 147) or *"I find this activity very interesting, I write and create whatever I think, so it's not too difficult"* (Student 180). Finally, a small group of students (4.9%) described the activity as easy. These individuals were highly engaged in the creative writing process and motivated by personal interest or passion. One student wrote, *"I like art, so for me, I don't find it hard"* (Student 58), while another added, *"I have a passion for composing and art, so I think it is not difficult"* (Student 72). Overall, these responses show that students had different experiences and opinions about how difficult it was to do creative writing through image creation. This highlights the need to support students with different levels of creativity and skill in this kind of activity.

The final question in the survey was an open-ended item that asked students to freely express their opinions regarding the advantages of the image-based creative writing approach. As previously noted, one key advantage highlighted was the high level of student engagement. Here are several advantages, including relaxation, enhanced creativity, development of logical thinking, and opportunities for personal growth. Below are some typical responses:

"In my opinion, this activity is useful because it increases creativity and helps relax the mind" (Student 40).

"Creative writing is very useful to stimulate the brain and make learning process more fun" (Student 142).

"I find it useful because it helps me more creative, helps me expand my logical thinking and love our study more" (Student 12).

"Creative writing is a useful activity for each student, giving us a platform to showcase our abilities. It can also be applied for future projects such as PR to present ourselves in the most impressive ways" (Student 99).

DISCUSSION

While the study is primarily concerned with the pedagogical integration of visual-textual tasks, its findings simultaneously point to broader interpretive implications when situated within a cultural and socio-educational framework. Among the participants, 57.14% successfully created visual-textual compositions, and a notable majority (81%) reported affective satisfaction with the activity. These results, however, should not be hastily read as straightforward indicators of instructional success or enhanced motivation. Rather, classroom dynamics suggest that image-based writing served as a conduit through which students negotiated their sense of belonging in a media-saturated learning environment. One student, when asked why she shaped the coffee cup, replied: *"Because when I study, I always drink coffee, it makes it real."* Such gestures reveal affective anchoring, not performance for grading purposes.

The motifs chosen by students: arrows, letters, clocks, suns, coffee cups are far from incidental. As Barthes (1977) argues, everyday signs may function as "mythologies," coded with layers of cultural and emotional meaning. A heart-shaped layout, for instance, might signal more than affection; it expresses a culturally available lexicon of intimacy, care, and longing. In one case, a student arranged her writing to form a broken heart, paired with phrases like *"I don't know if I'll succeed"* and *"my parents are trying."* The use of arrows, by contrast, often indexed progress or aspiration reflecting the normative weight placed on educational achievement. Rather than decorative,



The semiotic richness of these works becomes especially apparent when interpreted through Southeast Asian cultural sensibilities, which often blend indirect emotional expression with heightened visual sensitivity. In several Vietnamese submissions, references to mothers, flowers, or red suns appeared repeatedly - cultural symbols saturated with affective resonance. One male student commented that he shaped his writing like a flower because “it’s nice. Like my mom.” In such instances, the visual mode is not merely expressive, but relational. As Nguyen (2021) point out, students today are increasingly compelled to *perform creativity* not as a form of inner freedom, but as a visible marker of individuality, authenticity, and future employability. Visual writing, then, becomes a negotiation: students learn to externalize affect in ways that are socially intelligible and institutionally legible.

This ambivalence was echoed in students' feedback. While many described the task as "fun," "relaxing," or "a new way to think," others found it "difficult" or "strange". In fact, 66.5% reported difficulty, and 18.1% found it "very difficult." One participant noted: "I'm not used to making creative things - I'm not an art person." Another wrote: "How do I know if my design is meaningful? Maybe it's silly." These moments of uncertainty signal a core paradox in contemporary pedagogy: creativity is celebrated, yet closely surveilled. Students are expected not only to be creative, but to *display* creativity in codified ways—visually appealing, symbolically coherent, emotionally resonant. The pressure is no longer just to express, but to perform legible emotion under evaluative conditions.

Interestingly, the interpretive work did not end with the production of visual writing. In post-task discussions, students frequently read each other's designs aloud, tracing shapes, debating the meaning of color or layout. In one case, a group collectively interpreted a sun-like composition as either "hope" or "stress," depending on whether the rays pointed outward or inward. Such moments transformed the classroom into a co-interpretive space—what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) might call a multimodal communicative environment—where meaning was generated not only by the author, but collaboratively reconstructed by peers. This dynamic situated students not merely as "learners," but as embodied readers and meaning-makers.

Figure 8 offers a striking example. In this piece, the student designed her message around a bodily schema: the “head” section contains “Mom is the best mother,” the arms describe “She is so kind and loves me,” and the torso says “She is a good cook... She hugs me.” The feet conclude with “She says ‘Baby, I love you.’” The reader must move through the image as if navigating a human form. This method reflects a kind of embodied cognition, where meaning unfolds not only semantically but spatially, through physical orientation and emotional sequencing. Such artifacts blur the line between personal narrative and design logic, turning the act of reading into a relational encounter.

Mom
 is the best
 mother
 so kind and loves me
 is she is a good a
 She cook. She never lot
 makes me cry. She
 will appease me when
 I cry. She will hug me and
 she says
 "baby baby
 I love you!"

Figure 8. A creative writing created by student (Shape of a woman: Quynh, 2023, p. 152).

These patterns correspond with growing scholarly emphasis on visual literacy in contemporary education. Researchers have argued that textuality is no longer bound to linearity; visual modes increasingly dominate how meaning is communicated (Bayezit and Adiguzel, 2024; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Affective nuance, cultural specificity, and identity play often elude paragraph-based prose. In contrast, image-text hybrids enable learners to operate on multiple registers simultaneously - cognitive, aesthetic, social. In this classroom, students weren't simply "creative" in a generic sense; they crafted multimodal arguments, each with its own visual grammar and emotional charge.

It is also worth interrogating how these student products relate to dominant academic norms. Many compositions included non-standard features - pictograms, repetition, blank spaces - that would normally be flagged as errors in traditional writing. However, when viewed through a different lens, these devices function as expressive strategies. They emphasize rhythm, mood, and form over grammar and coherence. In this respect, the work resonates with Ingold's (2013) conception of line-making as expressive movement, and with Berlant's (2011) account of *affective atmospheres* - where feeling is communicated through texture and gesture rather than clarity. What emerges is not disorder, but an alternative mode of knowing: bodily, emotional, spatial.

Finally, this study cannot be abstracted from its Vietnamese institutional context. Vietnam's educational system is undergoing rapid shifts—globalization, digitalization, policy reform—all of which place pressure on students to adapt to international benchmarks while remaining embedded in local cultural traditions. The creative artifacts produced in this study reflect that dual imperative. Symbols such as hearts, flowers, mothers, computers, clocks, and suns recur not as generic icons, but as culturally entangled signs. They mark an attempt to reconcile global pedagogical discourses (e.g., STEAM, innovation, creativity) with vernacular aesthetics grounded in emotional attachment and social continuity.

In short, what might appear as a small innovation in teaching turns out to be a potent pedagogical terrain—one where creativity, visual literacy, and emotional labor intersect. The classroom is no longer merely a space for skill acquisition; it becomes a semiotic arena where students grapple with tensions between expression and legibility, individuality and recognition. Through image-based writing, they rehearse what it means to be seen, to be felt, and to take shape in an educational culture that demands both authenticity and performance.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the pedagogical and cultural significance of image-based creative writing among university students in Vietnam. By applying a six-step creative writing model within an action research framework, the project demonstrated that students were not only capable of producing 23 distinct visual-textual forms, but also actively engaged with the task as a space for self-expression, affective communication, and cognitive exploration. These findings reaffirm the idea that creativity is not an innate gift possessed by a few, but a distributed potential activated under the right pedagogical conditions—an insight that aligns with Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences and contemporary understandings of learner agency.

Importantly, the results indicate that students valued the multimodal format not simply as a novel classroom activity, but as a meaningful medium for articulating personal thoughts, emotions, and aspirations. Their

enthusiastic responses, both in written feedback and informal class discussions - highlighted a widespread desire for writing tasks that move beyond formulaic genres to allow more embodied, affectively resonant, and visually rich expression. In this sense, image-based writing represents more than a method; it becomes a mode of learning through which students negotiate visibility, identity, and belonging within increasingly performance-oriented educational environments.

From a broader perspective, this research contributes to emerging scholarship on multimodal literacy, student-centered pedagogy, and the affective turn in education particularly in non-Western contexts where creativity is often constrained by rigid curricular norms. The findings suggest that incorporating visual-symbolic writing into standard instruction may offer a valuable pathway for reimagining literacy education in Vietnam and similar postcolonial societies undergoing rapid educational reform.

While the scope of this study was necessarily limited to a single institution and a single cycle of implementation, its implications are neither narrow nor incidental. Rather, the study opens new avenues for inquiry into how creative practices can be localized, scaled, and sustained. Future research should consider comparative or longitudinal designs to examine how students' multimodal literacy evolves over time and across diverse institutional settings. In doing so, image-based creative writing may prove to be not only an instructional tool, but a culturally grounded practice for nurturing expression, connection, and imaginative resilience in contemporary education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The authors confirm that they adhere to the ethical standards described in this article and have not used AI in writing. The authors list the following credit contributions: **Thuy-Quynh**: writing-model constructing, survey designing, data collecting, data analyzing, writing original draft, manuscript editing and reference writing; **Dang-Tri**: data collecting, data analyzing, data checking, manuscript editing and reference writing and checking.

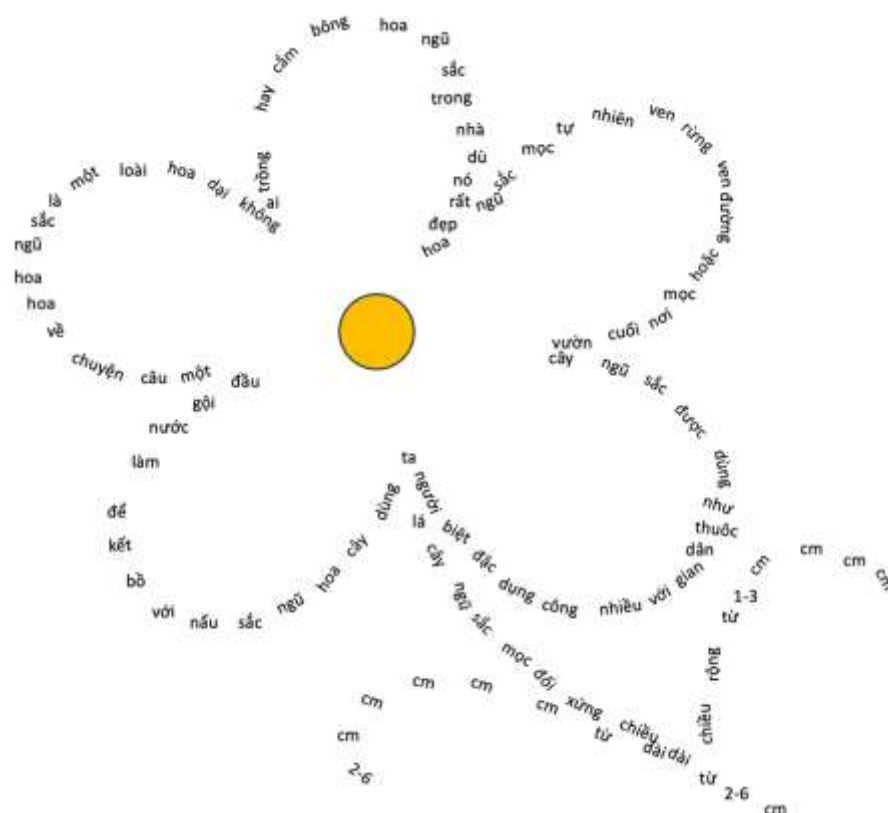
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Books are packed with knowledge. they give us life lessons and they teach us about hardships,love,fear & every little thing that is a part of life. A book is like a best friend that constantly inspires us to become the best versions of ourselves. Books enrich our minds with knowledge just like a good friend. We can learn a lot from books and they can help us in overcoming our failures as well as shape our minds. Books help in building our confidence. When we read a book, we get to learn about the struggles and hardships of various characters. Sometimes, we relate those situations to our personal lives. Understanding the situations of the characters and howtheyovercome the difficult times times and

challenges
give us courage,
confidence to deal with
our problems . Also, a well-read
person always has more knowledge
about various topics that will equip that
person better for social situations and for
holding conversations with groups of people
When I read a book, I read it for pleasure. I
just indulge myself in reading and experience
a whole new world. Once I start reading a
book I get so captivated I never want to leave
it until I finish. It always gives me a lot of
pleasure to read a good book and cherish it
for a lifetime. Reading is important because
it helps develop our mind and gives
us knowledge and lessons of life
It helps us understand the
world around us and
It also keep our
mind more
@ active



bài thơ
chiếc bình
hoa nhỏ
em anh
chỉ cứ
là đem
một theo
chiếc mọi
bình nơi
hoa mọi
bằng chỗ
thuỷ em
tĩnh giữ
thỏ cho
anh anh
đừng bông
sợ hoa
vỡ cỏ
mùa cuối

I
Have fed it
a cute cat. from when
It was young. Her name is Mi. Mi
has a yellow coat with a short chase.
She has a black-eyed which can glow
in the dark. She has a tiny nose with a
pair of small ears. She is not fat but
She looks very cute with tiny
body. She is really cute in
my eyes. She likes playing with
colors wool rolls. Especially She likes
to lie in my arms. And of course I always
do that. She always says meow. Probably, It
shows that Mi is happy for that. I like stroke her
soft coat. She make me feel happy. I think I'm lucky
enough to have Mi.

Earth is the
third planet from the sun and
the only astronomical object known to
harbor life. this is enabled by earth being an
ocean world, the only one in the solar system sust-
aining liquid surface water. almost all of earth's water
is contained in its global ocean, covering 70.8% of earth's
crust. the remaining 29.2% of earth's crust is land, most of
which is located in the form of continental landmasses within
earth's land hemisphere. most of earth's land is at least some-
what humid and covered by vegetation, while large sheets of
ice at earth's polar deserts retain more water than earth's
groundwater, lakes, rivers, and atmospheric water combined.
earth's crust consists of slowly moving tectonic plates,
which interact to produce mountain ranges, volcanoes,
and earthquakes. earth has a liquid outer core that
generates a magnetosphere capable of deflect-
ing most of the destructive solar winds
and cosmic radiation. We love
Our earth very much

Hi guys
My name is Thao.

Today I will tell you about the
Polar bear. The polar bear is a very big
White bear. It lives inside the Arctic Circle
The North Pole. This bear is 3 meters
Long and it weighs 450 kilos. It can
Stand up on its back leg because it
Has very wide feet. It can swim 120 km out
Into the water. You cannot se the polar bear in
The snow because its coat is yellow-white. It has a
Very warm coat because the weather is cold North of the
Arctic Circle. It catches fish and sea animals for food. It goes
Into the sea when it is afraid. People like to kill the
Polar bear for its beautiful white coat.
That's all about my posts

Tại
môi trường
học tập ở Ulis
một môi trường học
tập chuyên nghiệp, năng
động, sáng tạo, chỉ số vượt khó
AQ được cho là chỉ số rất quan trọng
vì người học luôn luôn phải đối mặt với
nhiều deadlines để hoàn thành các
môn học. Điều này đòi hỏi
người học phải có
chỉ số AQ cao
để vượt lên
gian khó
này

My
little house
is beautiful. It has
three floors. The first floor
Has a living room. It has a big tivi
and a big table is in the center of the
living room. Next to the living
room is the kitchen room. It
has a electric stover, a sink,
A cubboard, and a trash can
The second floor has three
bedrooms, one for my parents
two for me .It has a bathroom
The third floor is for my sister