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I-RoLE 2023

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

**EMBRACING CHANGE:
EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE
OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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CULINARY AND CREATIVE WRITING: WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

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ABSTRACT:

Creative writing is usually associated with written works such as short stories or poems while a recipe is considered to be a form of technical writing due to the precise measurements of the ingredients. Creative writing is currently gaining popularity among the younger generation, but cookbooks are deemed irrelevant as recipes can be found online on blogs and social media platforms. However, beyond recipe compilation, a cookbook can also be used as a heritage preservation tool. Thus, it is important to get the younger generation interested in reading and owning cookbooks. To do so, cookbook authors should explore new ways of presenting the recipes to their readers. Therefore, the objectives of this project are to promote the usefulness of creative writing skills and to innovate the typical writing style of a cookbook by using creative writing elements. In this book, selected family recipes are rewritten as poems and short stories, which are then compiled as an e-book. Positive response from the participants of the survey indicates that there is a market for this innovative product.

Keywords: creative writing, poetry, short stories, cookbooks

1. INTRODUCTION

Creative writing is defined as any form of non-academic or non-technical writing. This can include both fictional and non-fictional works such as novels, short stories, biographies and poems. Creative writing is one of the most freeing uses of writing as it lets the writers to use their imagination and creativity to write up anything that's in their minds, functioning as a form of self-expression. Glatch (2020) points out that improving creative writing skills leads to better communication skills. This is because creative writing requires the authors to search for the most suitable words for their stories and poems. Such activity will activate parts of the brain that are related to communication (e.g., writing and speaking).

Creative writing works, poetry in particular, is also gaining popularity among the younger generation. According to research by the National Literacy Trust (2022), 28% of their respondents (aged 8 to 18) reported that they read poetry in their free time. While there is growing interest in creative writing among the current generation, the same cannot be said for their interest in academic and technical writings. Such writings are often thought to be tedious and uninspiring.

Recipe is a form of technical writing because the list of ingredients requires precise measurements. Due to the emergence of food blogs and cooking related contents on social media, most people nowadays do not see the relevancy of cookbooks. Rather than read a typical cookbook, people can just go to social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok to get recipes from influential content creators (e.g. Che Nom and Khairul Aming). Food blogs and culinary themed website such as Delish and Tasty has also ventured online, further reducing



the need for a cookbook. According to Sun (2022) the complex recipes in cookbooks can be off-putting and sourcing recipes online is a better option. This reflects the current generation's view on cookbooks being irrelevant.

Yet a cookbook is more than just a cooking manual. It can be used to record family traditions and history. It can also spark curiosity in the readers to learn more about their heritage and culture. There needs to be a way to entice the younger generation to view cookbooks as still being relevant. One way to do that is to explore innovative writing styles for cookbooks that can attract its intended audience. Hence, the author is inspired to create the project "Culinary and Creative Writing: When Two Worlds Collide" which aimed to bridge the gap between creative writing (poems and short stories) and technical writing (cookbook recipes).

1.1 Project Purpose

The main purpose of this project is to highlight the versatility of creative writing works such as poems and short stories. For most people, this type of writings is regarded as leisure reading materials or used as a form of self-expression. In the context of language learning, creative writing classes often focuses on specific aspects such as vocabulary and grammar. The narrative writing style also helps lessen writing anxiety. In addition, Pawliczak (2015) found that students view creative writing activities as important for the purpose of developing writing skills, improving language proficiency, and enhancing creative thinking. However, creative writing has more potential than these. This book proves that poems and short story can also be used to impart practical skills (e.g. cooking skills) to the readers.

Another purpose is to collect recipes that have been handed down from the previous generation and present them to the new generation in a fun and creative way. As a cultural preservation tool, a cookbook prevents a certain culture from being lost and provides a way for the next generation to reproduce, preserve and innovate what has been passed down to them (Ng & Karim, 2016). Innovating the writing style of a cookbook by combining it with creative writing elements can increase the appeal to the younger generation. They can appreciate the poems and short stories and learn recipes at the same time. Additionally, they may be inspired to create a similar book for their own family recipes. For this purpose, the author has selected five family recipes to be included in the book.

1.2 Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Since this project is to compile a series of creative writing elements, such as poetry and short stories into an e-book, there is only one entrepreneurial opportunity that is relevant to this project, which is to publish the e-book for a profitable income. Although there is a concern on whether publishing cookbooks can still be profitable, data indicates that the sales of cookbooks has generally remained stable over the years and even had an increase of 16% during the pandemic (Fields, 2023). This shows that cookbooks still have their value in the market.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The project began with online research, to see if there are any published book of similar theme. While it is common to write poetry with culinary as the main topic, most of these poems focuses on food description or generally talking about the acts of cooking and eating. The use of poetry and short stories to present step-by-step cooking recipes have rarely been explored and therefore can be considered "unique." However, the scarcity of reference materials or published works also makes the book challenging to write.



After the project idea was approved, a market survey was conducted to gauge potential interest in the project and feedback on the types of recipes that should be included in the book. The five recipes chosen for the book are *Sambal Ikan Bilis*, *Asam Pedas Pari*, *Siakap Stim*, *Ayam Palembang* and Butter Chicken. These are the author’s family recipes and are chosen because they fit one of the purposes of writing the cookbook which is to preserve history, heritage and culture.

2.1 Poems and Short Stories



Figure 1. Haiku



Figure 2. Short Story (snippet)

The next step is to start writing the recipes as poems and short stories. Overall there are two free verses (*Asam Pedas Pari* and *Ayam Palembang*), one haiku (*Sambal Ikan Bilis*) and two short stories (*Siakap Stim* and *Butter Chicken*) in the book. A haiku is a type of poem originating from Japan. It is written in a style of three unrhymed lines consisting of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively (Sarkar, 2020). Haiku can be considered quite restrictive as the poet needs to adhere to the set syllable structure. In contrast, free verse is a type of poetry that resembles a speech and typically does not have a set pattern or rhythm. The combination of short stories and two different styles of poetry in the book not only provides variety but also exposes the readers to different types of creative writing.

2.2 Cover Design



Figure 3. E-Book Cover

Once the writing phase was completed, the project moved to the designing phase. The layout of the e-book resembles a typical cookbook in which the pictures of the dishes is featured alongside the recipes. To complete the book, this designing phase also involved preparing the ingredients and photography session for the cooked dishes. A vibrant colour is chosen for the cover to attract readers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Prior to writing the book, a market survey was conducted. A total of 20 respondents participated in the survey. Table 1 shows the results from questions meant to gauge the interest of potential readers. All the respondents agree that if a cookbook is written in an interesting way, they would consider reading it. In addition, 95% of them think that implementing creative writing elements in a cookbook will make it more interesting to learn how to cook. 100% of the respondents also agree that they would be interested to buy a creatively written e-cookbook.

Items	YES	NO
If there was a way to make cookbooks more interesting, would you consider reading them?	100%	0%
Do you think learning cooking recipes would be more interesting by implementing creative writing elements?	95%	5%
If the collection of creatively written recipes were to be compiled in an e-book, would you be interested to buy it?	100%	0%

Table 1. Interest for the project

The survey also included a question about the suitable price range for the e-book. The result in Table 2 shows that 55% of the respondents chose RM10 to RM20 as the price range for the book. Based on this feedback from the respondents, the author decided that RM15 is the most suitable sale price for the e-book.

Items	Less than RM10	RM10-RM20	RM30+
What do you think the price range of the e-book should be?	20%	55%	25%

Table 2. Potential price point for the book

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the e-book has proven the possibility of expanding the use of creative writing beyond merely writing non-fiction works. As such, the e-book “Culinary and Creative Writing: When Two Worlds Collide” has achieved its primary purpose in combining creative and technical writing to create an innovative product. Despite the successful completion of the book, the project did face some limitations such as the lack of respondents and time constraints.

Moving forward, the project can be further improved by adding more recipes using other types of creative writing such as song lyrics and acrostic poems. This can not only attract more readers but also allows more family recipes to be preserved for the next generation.

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