

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing
Prof. Neelima Talwar
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

Lecture - 7
Creativity and Culture / s

(Refer Slide Time: 00:27)



So, let us see now in this session what we have done so far. In the last few lectures, we looked at words, and we have been emphasizing the need to pay attention to words. We really have to rework our relationship with words and languages, and we are aware of the complexities of the task.

So, we have dipped into the present Indian context that is demands by on the one hand placing the subaltern perspective, and on the other hand also looking at globalization processes and the connections; these have thrown up with the very fast changing world around us. We have also looked at multilingual plurality of India, and also the multilingual plurality that exists within us. We have tried to understand the locus and the nature of English as an Indian language. This we maintain is problematic area for reasons that we have already articulated. Therefore, although English is an Indian language, but the relationship with English language will really be somewhat paradoxical, because after all languages keep changing with times and therefore we can rework our relationship in substantive ways.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:49)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Examples of some Indian language scripts and words in Indian languages that mean:

- 1. Creative**
- 2. Creativity**

NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

4

Some of the examples of Indian language scripts and words; these were presented before you, in terms of the word creative and creativity.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:59)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Discussion on the natural multilingual environment experienced by Rinal Chheda

NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

5

This activity led to a presentation by Rinal, who talked about the natural environment and the way languages co exist and also her own take on some of the issues related to the worlds creativity and creative. So, as madam said about the multilingual nature in India, and the various languages spoken in the country, I would like to say that since my childhood itself, I have born in a very multilingual environment. So at home, I spoke

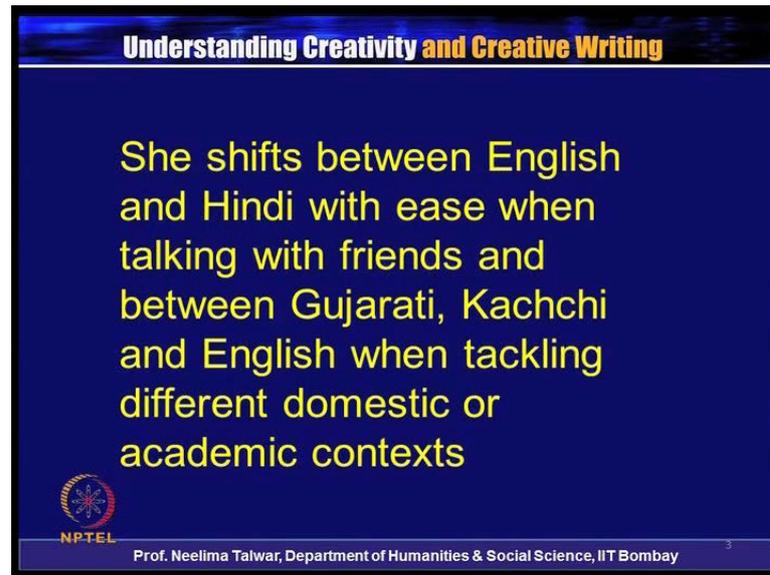
Gujarati and Kachchi and then went in school and we generally speak in English and Hindi. Then in high school, Marathi was added to it. Then from my higher studies, when I went for engineering, in my hostel I had students speaking various languages such as Bengali, Oriya, many south Indian languages, mainly Telugu. So, there was always a wide exposure of various languages surrounding me. It was taken for granted, I mean, I had never so consciously realized about the various languages that was spoken around. Eventually, I started learning Oriya. Not because there was a language barrier in conversing with them, but because learning a new language was fun.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:27)



Presently, certain linguistic fears have evolved in my day to day life. At home, I converse in Gujarati and on the campus and amongst friends, I speak in Hindi.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:40)



Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

She shifts between English and Hindi with ease when talking with friends and between Gujarati, Kachchi and English when tackling different domestic or academic contexts

 NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Science, IIT Bombay

3

While writing or talking about academic topics, I switch to English. In case of informal writing, like when I write my diary, I usually write in English and switch to Hindi, when I cannot find the right words to express my thoughts in English. Thus, I switch between two languages back and forth. However, I use the roman script all the time even while writing Hindi words. Similarly, when I chat on the internet, I type Hindi words in the roman script while talking to most of my friends. It has become so common that it does not take any effort to spell out the Hindi words.

So, this is what we did so far. From that perspective, we felt that it is time for us to look at creativity and the relationship of creativity to words, to language, languages, in terms of some very important western viewpoints that have animated this discussion over the last few decades.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:49)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Creative

a word in the English language with only positive connotations

NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

3

We started off by actually quoting Raymond Williams from his famous study titled, The Long Revolution. He had pointed out that this is a word in the English language with only positive connotations.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:04)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Our Aim

To develop generative exercises, we turn to a seminal work by a scholar who influenced the growth of Cultural Studies.

We begin by interpretations of the words **culture** and **creative** by Raymond Williams.

NPTEL

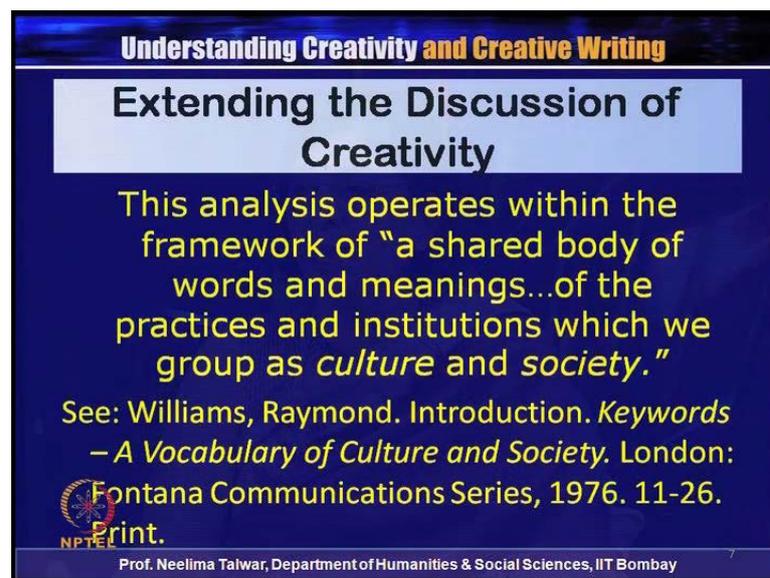
Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

6

Once again, it is useful to point out that, although we are dipping into this very significant study and the ideas of a very important thinker, but our idea is to use it to develop generative exercises. Reason is that you have already dipped into some of these personal issues, personal explorations, your own environment, and the Indian reality at

many levels. Although this is a starting point, but you know you can begin to build on those experiential aspects. So, I think it is time to dip into a more systematic way of looking at some of the issues. What we have done is to look at the word culture and the word creative for our exercise today. That is, the exercise of critical assessment and also exposure to this way of looking at analyses of the word culture and the word creative within culture.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:10)



Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Extending the Discussion of Creativity

This analysis operates within the framework of "a shared body of words and meanings...of the practices and institutions which we group as *culture and society*."

See: Williams, Raymond. Introduction. *Keywords – A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Fontana Communications Series, 1976. 11-26.

Print.

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

So now, let us see what Raymond Williams in his famous study, *Key Words - A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* has to say about his own work and the approach that he has undertaken here. This analysis operates within the frame work of a shared body of words and meanings of the practices and institutions which we group as culture and society. So, which are the institutions we group as society? What are the actions and activities we group as a culture? Also, the notion of society. What is society? What is this institution called society.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:54)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Why Keywords

The words selected by Williams are *Keywords* "in two connected senses: they are significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation; they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought." (15)

NPTEL
Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

How come he chose keywords? So, this is the explanation that he provided. He says the words selected are keywords in two connected senses: they are significant, binding words. I think they emphasize on binding words, that significant binding words in certain activities. So, they connect certain activities to some other activities or institutions. So, they are binding words. That is, words that are sort of actually resonate, they sort of move in the direction of many other activities.

In other words, while singling out these keywords, he is actually interested in looking at their vital connection with whole lot of other activities. Because, after all, words also represent activities and thought processes. That goes without saying. But, look at the word binding. Because, when we begin to look at this critical perspective, I think these ways of putting these ideas together are very useful and they will also provoke a lot of discussion and thoughts. Although, since I do not get to see you and I do not get to interact with you in a regular natural setting, that joy will be lost. But, we can find some other ways of compensating for it. But certainly, I think this word is what I would like you to concentrate on. So, they have both the sense of binding activities, but, they also have an abstract aspect, where certain forms of thought are indicated by their use.

So, this concrete and abstract, I think this is what he is trying to bring out in his approach. In terms of key words, culture and creative are not the only keywords he has chosen. He has chosen 131 keywords, if my counting is correct. In this addition that I am

using, he has used 131 words. For each word, he has also given connecting words, which he has placed within this study. So, there are about 131 keywords. But, I think we also need to understand something about why he chose these words and why he chose this approach of clubbing culture and society together.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:36)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Resonances with Multilinguality

To show that "important social and historical processes occur *within* language, in ways which indicate how integral the problems of meanings and of relationships really are....

NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

So now, to show you some of the resonances that we feel exist with the earlier part of our discussion, he says, to show the he has chose the study to show that important social and historical processes occur within language, in ways which indicate how integral the problems of meanings and of relationships really are. Now, this is a thought that I think would require certain amount of reflection on our part. Therefore, I like you to stay with it and when you follow up this lecture with the reading of the introduction, may be it will get clarified.

We will also try and see in what ways we can re emphasize and clarify this approach and this idea in the next module or in the next few lectures of the first module, in which we are trying to understand the general aspects of creative processes and how to trigger it and how to identify our own unique talent within whatever exercises we have undertaken.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:56)



Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Resonances with Multilinguality

...New kinds of relationships, but also new ways of seeing existing relationships, appear in language in a variety of ways: in the invention of new terms; in the adaptation, alteration of older terms; in extension or transfer.”(22)

NPTEL Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay 10

So therefore, I think it is best to come back to it, I would say time and again. The other resonance that was very palpable is related to new kinds of relationships, but also new ways of seeing existing relationships appear in language in a variety of ways: in the invention of new terms; in the adaptation, alteration of older terms; in extension or transfer.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:23)



Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Historical contextualization

- His own historical context.
- Emphasis of the study:
“The emphasis is not only on historical origins and developments but also on the present – present meanings, implications and relationships – as history.” (23)

NPTEL Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay 11

Let us see what else this holds for us. I think the important aspect of this study is related to the fact that, historically, the same words also undergo a lot of change. Actually, in

some ways, this is what he labeled as historical symantics. But, I think it also helps us locate the changing scenario or historically for ourselves. The historical context of Raymond Williams is that he himself steeped in 1945 post war Britain. When he came back from the war, he found that people around him used words in a way that he did not understand. The sense of meanings associated with many many words had changed. He was quite surprised by that. He was, I think, quite disoriented by that. So, he decided to study this phenomenon a little more carefully. He found that, people around him used the word culture more than any other word. I will read the statement that he made. He said, I found myself preoccupied by a single word, culture. It seems, I was hearing very much more often, that he had ever heard before.

So then this historical context, I think we should keep in mind. We have talked about the significance of maintaining the sense of historical context in every bit of our reading material, because it helps us establish our own critical relationship with the text. He says, The emphasis is not only on historical origins and developments, but, also on the present – present meanings, implications and relationships - as history.”

I would say as history in making, which is what we are doing, when we try to extend meaning or when we try to create meaning. We do not just stay with given meanings in our life. We try to give and find new meanings. So, in that sense, it is a very very important approach, where you look back at history and in terms of words, you look at the historical origin. You also look at how those have undergone changes. In his kind of analyses, you pin that in terms of the social context. That may mean, economic political situations, the attitudes towards certain institutions, may be the need for those institutions, and the economic efficacy of those institutions. We will have to see what that leads to. So, what he has done in terms of the methodology is really very very interesting and fascinating. This was such a discovery. Actually, I was familiar with many other studies, but, I have never dipped into it.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:52)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Clusters

a particular set of interrelated words and references with meanings that emphasize interconnections across domains

 NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

So, it is been a pleasure to dip into this study and find a very very useful methodology. What he has done is to identify these keywords and then for each keyword, he has clusters and we will share those clusters with you. So now, in these clusters, he has a particular set of interrelated words and references with meanings that emphasize interconnections across domains. So now, I am sort of moving towards the word culture, the way he has identified the word culture, and the way he has defined the word culture.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:34)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Culture

“is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” (87)

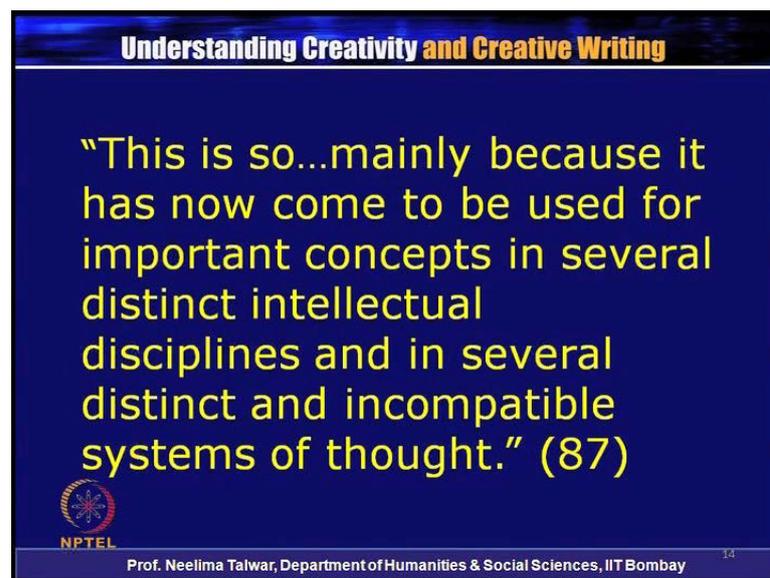
- Raymond Williams

 NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

I hope you will enjoy this activity. This is somewhat different from the usual vocabulary development work. If you have initiated that process already, you can share your thoughts and your concerns and your view points with us. So, the word culture now, in terms of the word or the term culture, the statement that he makes is very interesting. He says, "It is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." That is really quite a statement. Most complicated words in the English language.

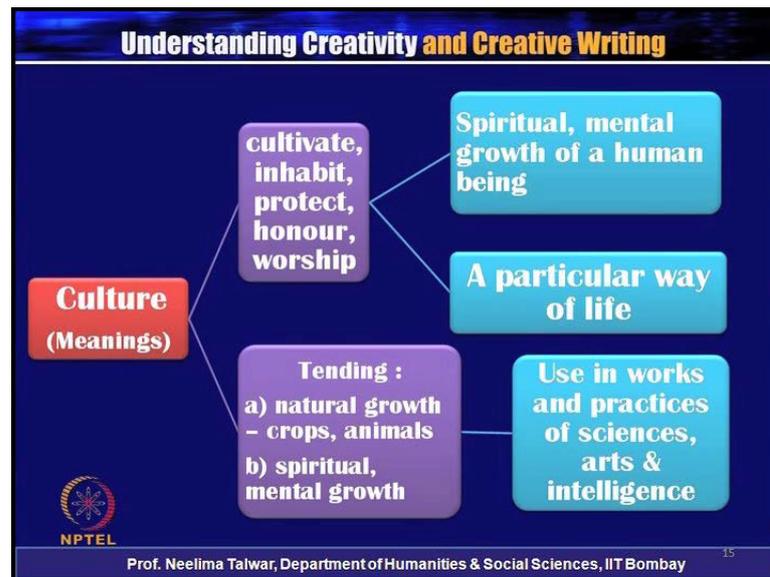
(Refer Slide Time: 16:16)



Then he goes on to say, this is so, mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought. Part of our aim in this first module is also to try and emphasize certain degree of independence of thought. So, even when we dip into new thoughts, we want you to first look at your own responses and then look at the more systematic analyses that is offered.

So, even if you interpret this in a simple surface way at this point in time, that would be fine. We would explain these ideas later on. Definitely that is a commitment I am ready to make right away. So, the term intellectual disciplines. What are these intellectual disciplines that he has in mind? What are these several distinct and incompatible systems of thoughts that he has in mind? Right now, we are looking at the clusters and we are looking at the term culture", in terms of his complexity.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:31)



Here is the first cluster, where the word culture and its meanings are given. He points out that, the word culture was used in earlier periods to cultivate, inhabit, protect, honor and worship. The other was tending. Tending, in terms of both natural growth, that is crops and animals, and also spiritual, mental growths. That kind of sounded really very interesting. I got quite excited by that. But, let us first look at the related set of ideas. Here is related to use in works and practices of sciences, arts and intelligence.

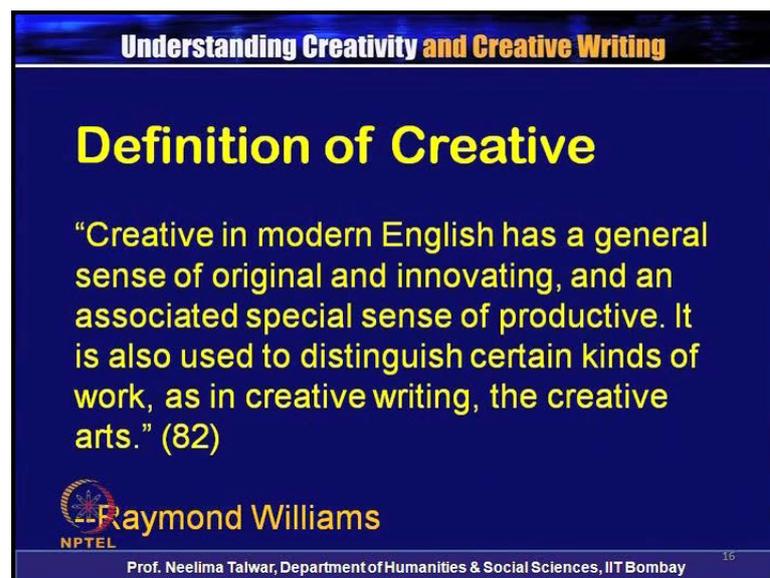
Somehow feel that there is a key here for us and we should open a new door or a door that was not opened for sometime by using this key. But, let us also see the other connotations here. So again, cultivate, inhabit, protect and then spiritual, mental growth of a human being, but also a particular way of life. In this particular way of life, it actually has led to the growth of disciplines like anthropology that look at this variety and diversities. As you know, we are talking to you, but simultaneously, I am also teaching this course in a regular natural IIT setting. The reason we have not been able to bring everybody here on board is primarily related to issues of logistics, the time frame in which the students work, their time tables are different and also in terms of clarity, the video course does requires greater degree of clarity. But, if we try this activity in class and it works out, we will come back with some of our findings and share those with you.

So, in terms of tending, my sense was that, maybe we can go back to this earlier term because, I think it may be sufficient for us to look at the word culture” and how it has

retained that earlier sense of tending, this tending of natural growth. In the earlier sense, it was crops and animals. What if we transform ourselves a little bit or transfer our setting in our imagination a little bit and create a pastoral setting. You may stay with your own experience of the big city or any other location where you exist and live your lives. But, may be you can examine what you feel about tending crops, and tending animals. Do you continue to have a relationship with the natural environment?

So, this may actually be quite an interesting exercise in trying to see what our relationship to our natural environment is. If we can build this as another theme in addition to the natural linguistic environment, I think that could be a very interesting step because, this will immediately lead us to other inter related ideas here of sciences and arts.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:05)



Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Definition of Creative

“Creative in modern English has a general sense of original and innovating, and an associated special sense of productive. It is also used to distinguish certain kinds of work, as in creative writing, the creative arts.” (82)

 **Raymond Williams**

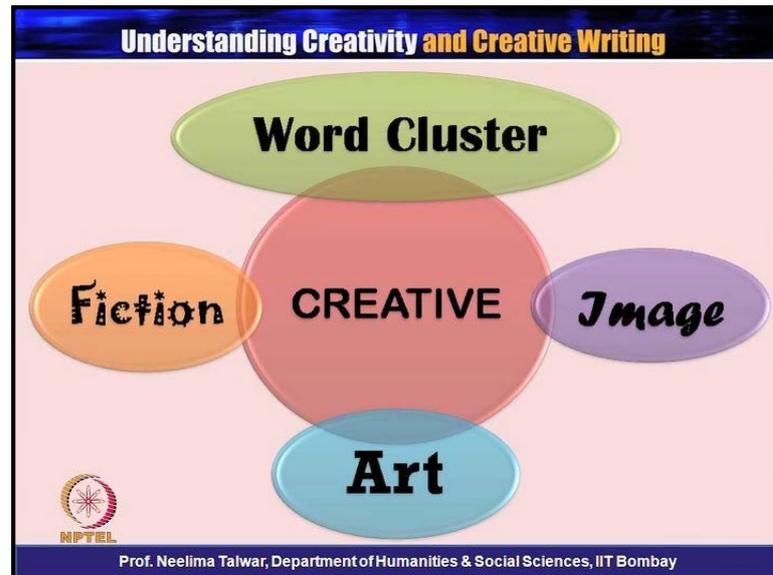
NPTEL

Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

16

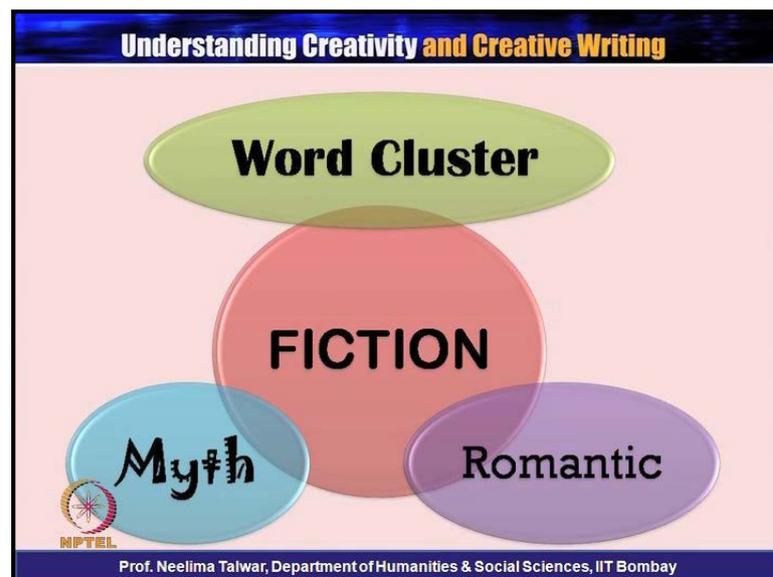
So now, let look at his definition of creative - the word creative. It is really not a definition, but, he is trying to work out the meaning associated with the word. So, it points out that creative in modern English has a general sense of original and innovating, and an associated special sense of productive. It is also used to distinguish certain kinds of work, as in creative writing, the creative arts.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:40)



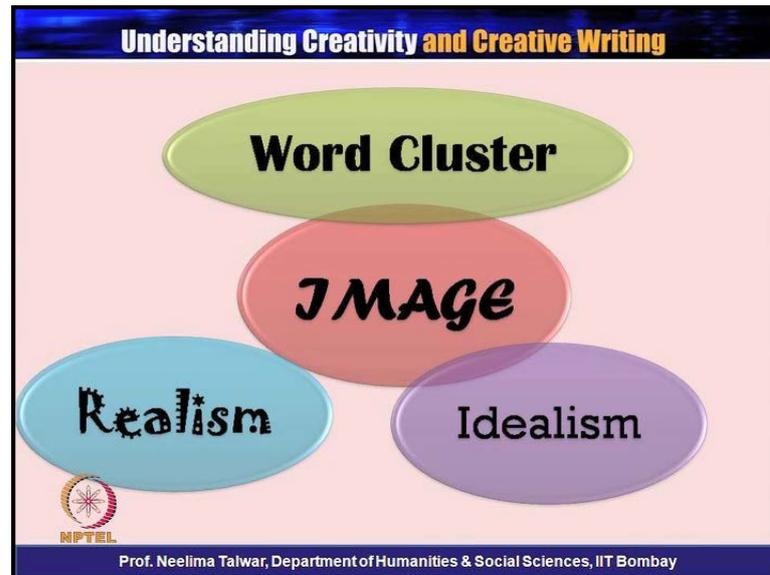
So, in terms of the word creative, we have fiction, we have image and we have art. I felt that it will be useful for us to look at the sub divisions in greater detail, in terms of the links provided for these. So, we start with the word creative, we look at the links for fiction that have been provided, we look at the links that have been provided for image, we look at the links provided for art.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:13)



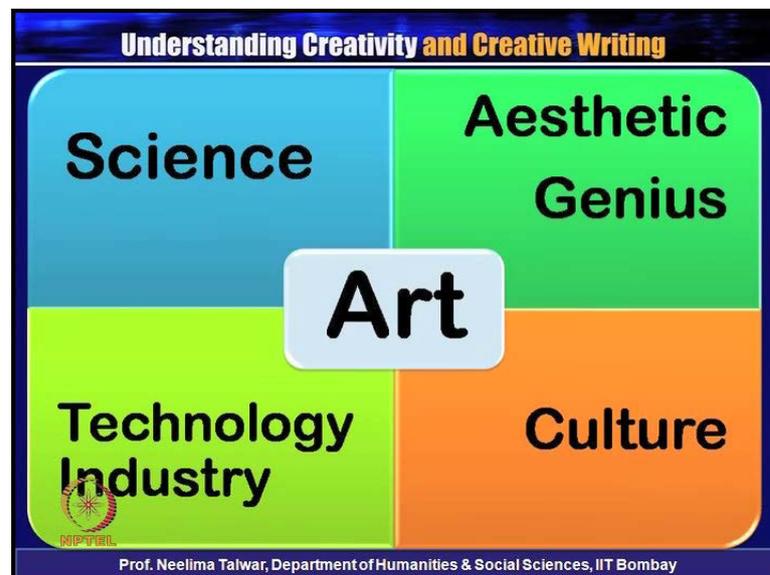
So then the word Fiction. Quite surprisingly, he has given two other words, that is Myth and Romantic.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:24)



The cluster for image is again quite surprising. There are only two inter relationships that he has mentioned. One is Realism and the other is Idealism. These inter relationships, to me on surface are not really very clear as to why Realism and Idealism. Realism still make sense. The whole tradition of my masses, which we would not dip into right now.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:53)



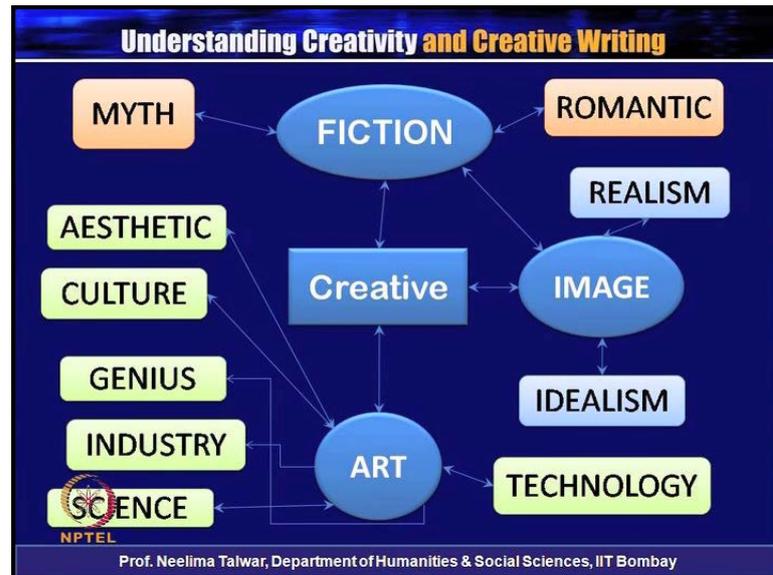
This word, I want to pay greater attention to. That is, the word Art. So, with reference to the word creative, as you remember this was one of the clusters. It is one of the three words in the cluster that he had given. So, when you dip into it, you come back to that

sense of culture and sense of tending and sense of tending in terms of intellectual practice, in terms of arts, in terms of sciences, and in the realm of what he described as intelligence. Since, we have the copyright permission from Raymond William's estate; let me read this longer quotation very clearly.

The original general meaning of art to refer to any kind of skill is still active in English, but, a more specialized meaning has become common. In arts, to a large extent in artist has become pre dominant. Art has been used in English from the 13th century. It was applied without pre dominant specialization until 17th century in matters, as various as mathematics, medicine and angling. In the medieval university curriculum, the arts, the seven arts and later the liberal arts were grammar, logic, retric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. An artist from 16th century was first used in this context. Though with almost contemporary developments to describe any skilled person as which it is in effect identical with artisan until 16th century.

As a practitioner of one of the arts in another grouping, those presided over by the seven muses that are history, poetry, comedy, tragedy, music, dancing and astronomy. Then from 17th century, there was an increasingly common specialized application to a group of skill. Skills not hitherto formally represented are painting, drawing, engraving, and sculpture. Now, dominant use of art and artist refer to these skills was not fully established until 19th century. But, it was within this grouping, that is 18th century and with special reference to the exclusion of engravers from the new royal academy, a general distinction between artist and artisan was established. The later being specialized to skilled manual worker without intellectual or imaginative or creative purposes was strengthened and popularized. This development of artisan and in the mid 19th century, definition of scientist allowed the specialization of artist and the distinction not now of the liberal, but, of the fine arts.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:31)



It is absolutely delightful to remember a time when the separation was not so sharp. What we would like to do is to really see if this is a theme that we can develop further, in terms of interfaces between these disciplines. For that of course, there is time and we also need to generate more activities. But, we will definitely look forward to your participation in trying to take this sense of connections further. So, to come back to the clusters, this is how it looks. I am not going to try and read it. I let you look at it.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:21)

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Word Usage

Which word do you use more frequently

culture

or

creative ?

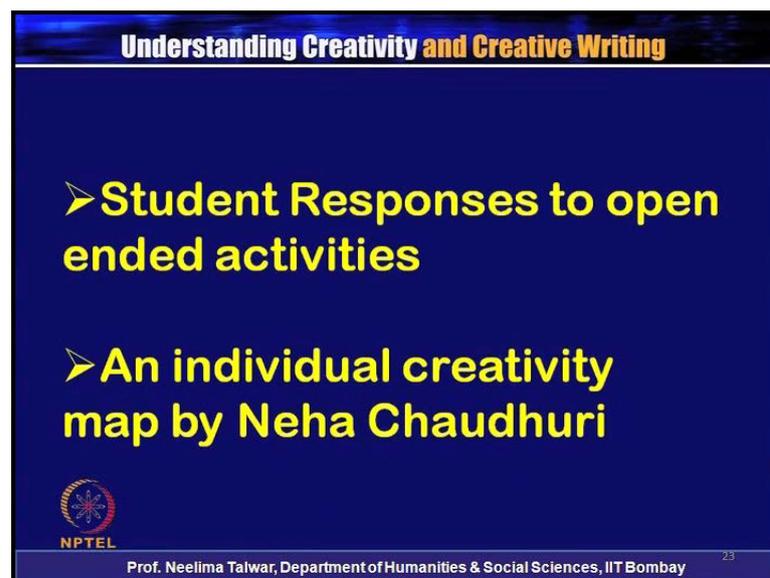
NPTEL
Prof. Neelima Talwar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

22

Let us now turn to ourselves. We looked at fascinating array of ideas based on deep critical analyses of culture and society. But, how do we look at these words. My simple question to many of my students was related to the word Culture and Creative and the frequency of use. So, I ask them which word you use more frequently. Is it Culture or Creative?

I was also aware of the fact that, often in our own languages, we use some of these words. We have started using a lot of English words in our own languages also. So therefore, the other question perhaps that I like to pose is related to the absorption of these words in your own mother tongue. Has the word culture been absorbed? Has the word creative been absorbed? The best way for you to get a flavor of the classroom situation is to have some representation from the class into this video course.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:26)



Therefore, I would now request Neha Chaudhuri, whom I have already introduced to you in the earlier part of this module as someone who has been intimately associated with the preparation of the power point presentation and also discussion about the content of the course. I would request her to share the flavor the class room participation and some of her own intentions in undertaking this activity in the class.

So now, Neha would make her own presentation and she will also give her own map. We also requested everybody in the class to prepare their own map of creativity, in terms of what kind of associations the term evokes. I just wanted them to let go, which is what we

would like you to do. However structured we may seem, but really, unless there is this letting go of your imagination, there is just no fun in doing this course. So now, let us have Neha over.

Hi. So, there is sort of inevitably a difference between how we did the activity in class and how I will present it to you here because, when we did this activity in the class, we did it before we read everything about Raymond Williams. We had a very instinctive response towards the kind of connotations the word Creative generated and the kind of activities when we thought about the word Creative. These activities are extremely open ended. They are deliberately open ended because, when professor Talwar and I began to discuss about how we will generate activities for the class to explore their sense of self or their creative potential, we realized that it is very difficult in a structured educational environment to have people find their own different paths. So therefore, we kept various activities like the childhood activity and this map activity as a deliberately open ended one because, we wanted as an exploration on your part. So now, I will move on to what different people said in their different maps about what creativity means to them.

So, most of them in this age of the fast paced world, most of them thought that creativity is something of a flash. It comes to you as a lightning idea. Just like a light bulb glows in your head. It is all about finding new ideas that comes to you at the tips of your fingers somehow. There is another very interesting take that we had from another person in the class. He said that creativity meant to him as a way of being efficient, like the way you do things in your field. So, in your profession, in your work, how efficient you are and the way you are able to manage your tasks is what creative meant to him. Then there were people in the class who thought about creative time. The time in which you do creative activities actually equals your leisure time. It does not equal the time where you work or where you pursue your profession. So, it is a divide between creative time and work time.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:09)

The slide features a blue background with a white border. At the top, the title "Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing" is written in white and orange. Below the title, the word "Learning: new skills/ideas" is displayed in white. To the left, a vertical list of activities includes pottery, sculpting, painting, movies, books, sketching, reading, and dancing. In the center, the phrase "Bonding with" is followed by a list of social connections: friends, family, co-workers, and strangers. To the right, a list of interests includes learning, bonding, fiction, technology, art, happiness, travel, and cooking. The word "Creativity" is prominently displayed in a large white box at the bottom right. The NPTEL logo is in the bottom left, and the slide number "24" is in the bottom right.

Then, I will just present to you a map that I made. I associate creativity with learning, with bonding, with fiction, technology, art, happiness, travel and cooking.

Thank you so much Neha.

It is actually absolutely delightful to really have students and other participants from the classroom situation to come here and share their views and ideas with others. We will keep doing this all the time.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:42)

The slide has a dark blue background with a white border. The title "Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing" is at the top in white and orange. Below it, "Suggested Reading" is written in large yellow letters. Two book recommendations are listed with yellow arrowheads: one by Cusick, Edmund, Jenny Newman & Aileen La Tourette, and another by Dawson, Paul. The NPTEL logo is in the bottom left, and the slide number "28" is in the bottom right.

Since we have a very little time left for this segment, let me just wrap up by talking about two books that we are going to dip into for generative activities. So far, we have not been able to share the generative activities pertaining to Raymond Williams in specific ways. We will do that and for that, we would recommend you know the introduction to or the use of the writers work book. Also Paul Dawson, who has talked about creative writing and the new humanities. These are very recent books and I think they contain practices from different parts of the world. So, you can get started with these books and get hold of them, and we will develop our own independent activities using some of the ideas that these books provide. Thank you very much. I look forward to talking to you again next time.

Thank you.