

Teaching Creative Writing through Reading Activities: A Study at Intermediate Level ESL Students

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Abstract

This research aims at devising a helpful method to teach creative writing to students. The focus of this research is on certain qualities of creative writing like novelty, accuracy, fluency, and flexibility which is the final goal of all related to teaching and learning to write creatively and persuasively. The researcher has conducted an experiment on the 12-grade students to teach them creative writing through reading activities. The study was conducted for 12 weeks in the 2020-2021 academic year, at the Superior group of colleges Rahim Yar Khan. The sample consists of 40 students equally divided into two groups, experimental and control groups. In this study, a pre and posttest design was used. The experimental group was taught through reading activities designed by the researcher, while the traditional method was used for the control group. The students in the experimental group received moral stories for reading. The students in the experimental group were asked to reframe the story by using their imagination. Whereas the control group was not given any specific treatment and was meant to serve as a comparison group. The performance of the experimental groups was measured and analyzed through pre and posttest's scores, it was noted that there was a significant statistical difference in the pre-and posttest scores. The posttest's scores also showed a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The posttest scores of mean values were also in favor of the experimental group. The result shows that reading activities have a positive impact on developing the student's creative writing.

Keywords: Creative writing, Reading, Intermediate level, ESL

1. Introduction

Creative Writing is an integral part of effective learning, but it lags in the Pakistani scenario. The Cramming method is spoiling the talent of fresh and innovative ideas, even discouraging the brainstorming process. Students in the linguistic dimensions are often very slow in advancing due to lagging in innovation.

According to (Rass, 2001), writing is the most difficult process which enables writers to explore and make visible and concrete thoughts and ideas. For native and non-native speakers, respectively, it is difficult for writers to manage various issues such as content, organization, intent, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. In addition, it facilitates thought and learning, encourages collaboration, and makes thinking open for contemplation. Ideas may be analyzed, reconsidered, applied to, reorganized, and modified when thinking is written down. Writing is exceptionally hard for non-native speakers, since scientific strategies are required in educational research to produce written products that demonstrate mastery in a new language for all the problems mentioned earlier.

Among all the causes of complexity with a reader, is that, physically absent and even unknown to the writer. Writing creates its meaning. The author is deprived of certain privileges, such as making direct references, communicating with and getting immediate input from the reader, receiving accurate information via gesticulations, facial gestures, and other paralinguistic elements on the reader's context awareness and comprehension (Rass, 2001). Through the theory of Cummins (the common underlying ability hypothesis), which proposes the transition of literacy from L1 to L2, the relationship between reading and writing can be traced back to the history of second language study in the 1980s. Cummins promises the transition of those forms of literacy skills to help the advancement of L2 literacy. In this perspective, researchers are still discussing the effect's path, whether from reading to Writing or the opposite (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000), Alderson's (the language threshold hypothesis) is the second theory that the reading/writing relationship can be traced (1984). He argues that before the transition takes place, L2 writers should build an appropriate L2 competency.

According to (Graham et al., 2018), in the veins of nations worldwide, the English language flows like blood. As a consequence, the demand for English has risen to the point that it requires the people of modern societies to be adequately fluent to excel in their academic and professional life (Graham et al., 2018).

Despite an acknowledged emphasis in Pakistani colleges on the English language, "Language students still face challenges in almost every field: reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar." (Fareed et al., 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Creative Writing is the ultimate goal of literacy. Extensive reading is proved helpful in many researches to improve the skills in order to write creatively. This research focuses on the enhancement of creative writing through extensive reading (stories) at intermediate level, where creative writing remains in the constraints of writing known ideas into students' own wording and doesn't mean to produce literary works like poetry etc.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The study of writing has been ignored for quite some time, which is resulted in psychologically unsound definitions and methodologically naive approaches. In Psychologist's view, writing as language behavior unfolding in time, open to direct observation and therefore to systematic empirical investigation (Espéret, 1991). Keeping this in view and the fact that in absence of methodology and with the traditional methods, creative writing skills cannot be developed. The current study is designed with the purpose to evolve a strategy for developing creative writing skills among Intermediate level students, leading to an improved instructional and learning environment in the creative writing classrooms. This research is devised upon the following hypothesis:

- Reading Activities are more effective than Traditional Method in order to teach students to write creatively.

1.3 Research Question

1: To what extent does story reading help to improve the creativity in writing skills of the students?

2: Does the reading activity have any advantage over the traditional method in order to teach students creative writing?

1.4 Background of Study

1.4.1 Creative Writing

Heritage and people are inventive in their daily lives, but they do not express themselves creatively since it is a tough skill to grasp in a second language. Learning to write successfully is an important component of education, and the ability to do so may provide learners with a significant advantage throughout their life (Bossé & Faulconer, 2008). It is important to emphasize that "writing is not an essential innate inclination, but a cognitive capacity" (Graham & Harris, 2007), and must be learnt through time through education or training. Despite the fact that English is taught as a second language and writing is a required ability in Pakistan, pupils experience severe difficulties expressing themselves in plain English throughout the educational cycle. As a result, the researcher discovered that writing instruction in Pakistan appeared to focus more on remembering ready-made responses from assistance books than on gaining communicative and creative abilities.

1.4.2 Creative Writing in Pakistan

Despite the range of forms, creative writing has always been referred to as literature in Pakistan. As a result, the term "creative writing" is still misinterpreted by Pakistani students and teachers, resulting in difficulties in the classroom. It is unquestionably the responsibility of English instructors to place a greater emphasis on creative writing, to comprehend the complexities of writing creation, in light of changing educational trends and the benefits of creative writing. According to (SALEEM & HAIDER, 2019), Pakistani instructors should consider their students' needs and preferences in order to encourage them to be expressive in writing. It is considered that if our expressive and communicative needs motivate us to write, creative writing may be both joyful and conscience-stirring.

1.4.3 The Four Areas of Language

In the absence of a uniform policy or plan and the insight into the process of language learning, the four areas are skills of English i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing all are equally neglected. The curriculum and the methodology being used in the language often do not aim at strengthening any of these skills, leaving all of them poorly developed among the learners.

1.4.4 Teaching Creative Writing in classroom

The current study is concerned with the teaching of creative writing in Pakistani classrooms, taking into account the teaching perspectives of Pakistani instructors. In Pakistan, classroom instruction is influenced by a number of factors, including curriculum and evaluation. Furthermore, instructors lack independence; they are unable to teach independently without the consent of the authorities. The implementation of a rigid curriculum and a clearly defined evaluation structure, in particular, have threatened teachers' professional autonomy and reduced their creativity. According to Hanke (2002), if the curriculum and evaluation framework do not enable instructors to function (Torppa et al., 2006), autonomously, their professional and intrinsic potential will be severely limited. This criterion applies to creative writing instruction in a classroom in Pakistan. A large amount of literature is produced as a result of effective creative writing instruction in the classroom. The diverse writers' perspectives on classroom experience assist to highlight flaws and tensions in educational practice in Pakistan.

1.4.5 Causes of Poor Writing Skills among Students in Pakistan

The present section of the study presented the previous work pertaining to study skills. The attention was paid on the literature that was directly connected to writing skills of the students and its impact upon writing faculties of the learners. The study carefully explored the factors that created influence upon the writing skills of the learners. The major objectives of the research were in accordance with the literature review of the study.

- Factors that influence writing skills of students
- Remuneration of teachers
- Teacher training (Pre-service preparation)
- External elements/ forces
- School culture
- In-service training
- Motivation to teach
- Emotional factors

1.4.6 Ways of improving the writing skills of students in Pakistani context

Writing ability of a student reflects his bent of mind and outlook. It is an important element to survive in the society. It is necessary that Pakistani students should acquire sound knowledge of writing skills. Without meeting the requirement of learning writing skills, it will hinder the capabilities of assessing and analyzing problems globally. For that reason, they should know the paramount importance of writing skills. It is necessary to simplify the procedure of acquiring knowledge with amalgam of variation. Learners avoid paying attention on the teaching of teachers when they use traditional methods of teaching and learners get motivated when teachers apply novel ways (Baba, 2009). The main thing to improve writing skills is to write essays to have practice of writing. The students need to be persistent in writing to become proficient writers in the target language. The learners with good writing skills can easily become proficient speaker of the target language. Writing skills help the students to be successful in practical life and in getting good jobs.

- Equalization of salaries
- Bursaries for students and stipends for teachers
- Social benefits
- Teacher induction and support

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Procedure

The present study aims to develop cause and effect relationship, hence the experimental research studies employed. The experimental and control groups were planned to be treated for twelve weeks of grade 12 students. The selection of the students was made, based on a simple criterion. i.e., the students who had passed their matriculation in English medium with a percentage of 85. The students' age range was 16 to 19 years old. For the control group, no specific technique was used for teaching creative writing, instead, they were taught with the traditional, method of teaching, while for the experimental group, a specific set of instructions was planned based on reading activities.

Moreover, students belonging to the experimental group were treated with these activities. Before giving the treatment, a pre-test was conducted from both the groups to identify their present knowledge. The experimental group was taught the essential grammar. Students were told the sentence and its parts, types of sentences, parts of speech, tenses with both voices, synthesis of sentences. Four weeks were assigned for these things. The next two weeks were utilized to make the students familiar with these key terms through the actual sample passages. Students were asked to identify and differentiate between the above-mentioned items. 24 Stories, which were subjected to be the actual sample, were given them and asked them to read, redraft, mold, make a parody, and use characters to invent a new story. A story was assigned daily for reading and doing the above mentioned drills.

To make the students able to write creatively through reading, we adopted a technique to teach them the stories adopting a new set of strategies based on drills. A few standards were set upon which, it was to be decided whether the students had the understanding or not. The stories were chosen accordingly to focus on the vocabulary, syntax, content, and style in English writing primarily. The following skills were to be identified in reading drills, through which the writing skills were to be developed under the reading activities. The students were

assumed to be able to give specific details stated in the reading material, give answers implied in the reading material, give the gist of the reading material, make, draw conclusions, arrange related items in sequence, summaries, give outlines, infer meaning from context clues and recognize antonyms and synonyms, redraft the reading material (Stories), mold them, make their parody, use the detail given in the reading material to invent a new story, changing their conclusions and giving the stories a different twist.

After treatment, a Post-test was also conducted to know the difference of the knowledge. Difference between the marks represented their level of achievement and how much improvement they had made in learning creative writing. After eliminating their grammatical errors, a criterion for the evaluation of the stories produced by the students was adopted, in which, researcher evaluated whether,

- i. The development of story is logical
- ii. The continuation of story is interesting
- iii. The ideas are original
- iv. The choice of diction is effective
- v. The language is colloquial

During the classes' conducting, the student's friendly environment was created for both the groups, so that the students learn and feel no hesitation in asking questions or in their performance.

2.2 Population and Sampling

This research strategy is applied to the 12th grade students of Superior Group of Colleges Rahimyar Khan Campus. 12th grade class is generally known as Intermediate Level and the examination is held under Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education/BISE. Different classes of 12th grade were selected for the population of current study. The only students with their matriculation in English medium and with a percentage of 85 in English were selected. Two groups with almost the same English proficiency, comprising twenty students each, were the two groups in this investigation. They were given the names A and B, were randomly designated as the Experimental and the Control group respectively. Both the groups were analyzed before the start of experiment to seek the equivalence. Group A, the experimental or treatment group, consisted of 20 subjects whereas Group B, the control

group, consisted of 20 subjects. The approximate age range of the students was between 16-19 years. The subjects belonged to similar backgrounds and social standing.

2.3 Traditional Method of Teaching

The same 24 stories were given to the comparison group. A story was taught daily as they were already being taught in the class room. The teacher read the story, translated it, made the key points clear to them, put a few questions in front of them. A few statements were extracted from the story and they were used to formulate MCQ's. Students gave their responses. No particular strategies adopted rather than a few one which were already in practice, i.e., asking about a statement whether it was true or false.

2.4 Research Instruments

Research instruments employed for this study to collect the data are as follows:

1. Questionnaire
2. Pretest
3. Grammar and its usage through exercises
4. Story reading and drills
5. Posttest

2.4.1 Questionnaire

The researcher designed a questionnaire to collect data about the participants for this research study to complete the selection process. The data collected related to their social background, schooling, their parents' profession and age range. The participants were asked to fill the questionnaire form to confirm their uniformity for sample.

2.4.2 Pre-test

A pretest was administrated in order to find out their competency in English. A 50, marks, one-hour, reading (Story) test was given to both the groups before carrying out the study. The test contained 5 short questions, carrying 10 marks each, - asking the students to reproduce the story, or to mold it or give it a twist aby changing its conclusion. Short questions were different in nature, aimed to check different skills, i.e., sentence structure, understanding, redrafting skills, molding skills, creativity and critical thinking. As far as reliability of the test, the Kuder Richardson formula 21 was applied which he lived on "R of .5", it was considered adequate as it was sub standardized test. The test was conducted for both classes

by investigator with the help of another teacher in the two groups' respective classrooms. Instructions regarding how to attempt test was clearly written on the paper and was repeated verbally as well as by the investigator before the test began. The stories were taken from the domains of English literature with an aim to have a few key concepts of grammar: Sentence type, parts of sentence, parts of speech and vocabulary and, at the same time, were capable of boosting creativity through enhancement of critical thinking and creativity. The test paper was designed to enable the participants to answer the same paper's questions. Later on, a panel of three examiners evaluated the subjects in the pretest and the median score given by the three examiners was assigned to each student.

2.4.3 Exercises for Usage Enabling of Grammar

The two groups were then instructed in usage enabling of grammar in allotted time period of four weeks using two methods of teaching for learning creative writing. The instruction imparted using reading activities to group A whereas group B was taught using traditional method of teaching constantly each day in allotted hours. The researcher instructed the given topics and discussed in both the groups using the two methods following exercises on grammar assigned to the subjects to practice and understand the concepts.

2.4.4 The study of grammar outlined for the subjects given hereunder

- Sentence and its different parts
- Types of sentences to achieve the purpose
- Parts of speech
- Reading Skills
- Understanding of various ideas

2.4.5 Reading Stories

The two groups; Experimental Group Section A and Control Group Section B, assigned selected stories and the study began with the instruction of creative writing to the Treatment Group using “Reading Comprehension Methodology” and “Traditional Method” used for the Control Group (Our control group cannot purely be called a control group, as we are giving them a treatment too, though the mode is different; traditional method).

Reading activities involved devising reading folktales on different morals enabling the subjects to develop on the topic, following which they wrote stories of their own on similar

morals or themes. The topics were diverse in nature to expand the scope and build interest in writing among the participants/subjects. Keeping the levels of understanding, the questions were devised for example evaluative, inferential, and textual. The sole purpose and focus of giving reading Folktales was on the vocabulary, syntax, content, context, style, creativity and enhancement of imagination in English writing. The following skills were intended to be developed in subjects using the Reading activities as student should be able to:

- Identify and give particular details provided in a Story.
- Do actively participate in drills in order to write creatively.

2.4.6 Post-test

The researcher himself served as an instructor in order to maintain the instruction style consistent in both groups, and it also contributed to the experiment in its true spirit. The validity of the danger presented by the use of instruction was therefore regulated. The analysis was carried out between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. during the first half of the college day, the first hour for the experimental group and the second hour for the control group, in order to control the fatigue component or any effect of the hot weather. The danger to validity raised by restricting instruction was managed in this weather. That atmosphere in the classroom was kept friendly so that the children could feel free to ask questions and share their experiences.

2.5 Variables

2.5.1 Independent Variable

Traditional method of teaching and Reading activities of teaching were Independent variable of the study for both the i.e. control and experimental group respectively.

2.5.2 Dependent Variable

Creative writing was the dependent variable for this experimental study.

Grammar based Teaching SLO's (Students' learning objectives)

- The teaching was conducted on the basis of grammatical topics as well as the
- Both the groups were taught on the basis of grammar with the following details.
- Sentence and its parts

- Types of sentences
- Parts of speech
- Redrafting
- Reframing
- Completing stories from short outlines
- Molding the stories
- Giving them new twists
- Writing new stories with same morals.

Reading Stories SLO's

- Give specific details stated in the reading material.
- Give answers implied in the reading material.
- Give the gist of the reading material.
- Make comparison.
- Make contrast.
- See relationships.
- Draw conclusions.
- Summarize
- Outline.
- Infer meaning from context clues.
- Redrafting of stories
- Completing stories through sketches and short outlines
- Molding the stories
- Giving the stories new twists
- Creating new stories under the same morals

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the technique or a process of systematic application to get statistical figures, graphs, or charts to evaluate the results taken from the samples. Data refers to the quantitative and qualitative values that a researcher observes or finds through his research study. In this chapter, the findings which were collected from alone class of Superior group of colleges of the District Rahim Yar Khan are interpreted and analyzed to reach the final results. All of the following results have been drawn with the help of SPSS.

Note: Out of 40 samples, 40 responded.

3.2 Data Analysis and Data Interpretation

This is an important chapter as, in this chapter collected data are discussed and interpreted that gives the clear information about the results of the research. Tables provide easiness in conceptualizing the acquired data.

Paired Sample T-Test of Pre-& Post-Tests (Control Group)

Table: 1 Paired Sample T-Test analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Controlled Group

Test	N	M	SD	D	T	Effect Size
Pre-Test	20	11	3.26	19	13.13	0.9007
Post-Test	20	22.35	2.20			

*Difference is significant at .05 level

Pretest Control group mean of obtain marks = 11

Control group S.D =3.26061

Posttest Control group mean of obtain marks = 22.35

Control group S.D = 2.207046

3.3 Paired sample

In table 1 paired sample t-test of pre-test and post post-test for control group has been given. In this table Total number of participants for both the tests were equal that is 20. Mean value

for pre-test is 11 and for post-test is 22.35, SD values are 3.26 and 2.20 respectively. Value of d is 19. In this comparison t value is 13.13 and effect size calculated as 0.9007. This value 0.9007 is less than 0.05 that indicates that, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of these tests hence, students' progress is better and their writing skill improved after teaching through traditional method of teaching.

Paired Sample T-Test analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Experimental Group

Table 2 Paired Sample T-Test analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Experimental Group

Test	N	M	SD	D	T	Effect Size
Pre-Test	20	11.95	2.35	19	43.793	0.99
Post-Test	20	41.80	2.16			

*Difference is significant at .05 level

Pretest Experimental group mean of obtain marks = 11.95

Pretest Experimental group S.D = 2.350252

Posttest Experimental group mean of obtain marks = 41.8

Posttest Experimental group S.D = 2.166734

In table 2 paired sample t -test of pre-test and post post-test for experimental group has been given. In this table Total number of participants for both the tests were equal that is 20. Mean value for pre-test is 11.95 and for post-test is 41.80, SD values are 2.35 and 2.166 respectively. Value of d is 19. In this comparison t value is 43.793 and effect size calculated as 0.99 this value 0.99 is less than 0.05 that indicates that, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of these tests hence, students' progress is better and their writing skill much improved after teaching through story strip method of teaching.

Independent Sample T-Test analysis of Pre-Test of Control Group and experiment group

Table 3 Independent Sample T-Test analysis of Pre-Test of Control Group and experiment group

Test	N	M	SD	d	T	Effect Size
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Control group	20	11	3.26	19	1.057	0.028
Experimental group	20	11.95	2.35			

*Difference is significant at .05 level

Control group mean of obtain marks = 11

Control group S.D = 3.26061

Experimental group mean of obtain marks = 11.95

Experimental group S.D = 2.350252

Independent sample

In table 3 independent sample t-test of pre-test and post post-test for control group and experimental has been given. In this table total number of participants for both the tests were equal that is 20. Mean value for pre-test is 11 and for post-test is 11.95, SD values are 3.26 and 2.35 respectively. Value of d is 19. In this comparison t value is 1.057 and effect size calculated as 0.028. This value of effect size 0.028 shows that both the groups have got approximately equal scores and there is a little bit difference which is negligible therefore we can say that there is no significant difference between the scores, hence both groups fall in equal category of marks.

Independent Sample T-Test analysis of Post-Test of control and experimental Group

Table 4 Independent Sample T-Test analysis of Post-Test of control and experimental Group

Test	N	M	SD	d	T	Effect Size
Control Group	20	22.35	2.207	19	28.12	0.95
Experimental Group	20	41.80	2.166			

*Difference is significant at .05 level

Posttest control group mean of obtain marks = 22.35

Control group S.D = 2.207046

Posttest Experimental group mean of obtain marks = 41.8

Experimental group S.D = 2.166734

Independent sample

In table 4 independent sample t-test of pre-test and post post-test for control group and experimental group has been given. In this table total number of participants for both the tests were equal that is 20. Mean value for pre-test is 22.35 and for post-test is 41.80, SD values are 2.207 and 2.166 respectively. Value of d is 19. In this comparison t value is 28.12 and effect size calculated as 0.95. This value 0.95 is less than 0.05 that indicates that, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of these tests hence, students' progress is better and their writing skill much improved after teaching by teaching creative writing through reading activities method.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary

Writing instructional methods can be developed and improved that students can be trained in creative abilities. The focus of the study, as stated at the outset of the thesis, was to compare two methods of teaching creative writing does Johnson the reading activities and the traditional method of teaching.

The strategy that was adopted in this connection was the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest controlled design wherein, two intact groups of intermediate grade students who are identified add the sample for the experiment. These groups are arbitrarily designated as experimental group and control group. The independent variable was the teaching method the reading activities used for the experimental group and for the control group, the traditional method is used, whereas creative writing was the dependent variable. The sample size was 40 students conveniently selected through random sampling.

4.2 Findings

There is no important difference in the differences in the pre-test score for both groups. It was also believed that both groups represented the same population.

There is no substantial difference between the mean achievements of both groups in the pre-test ranking. The two classes therefore have equal competence in the English language.

There is a substantial difference in the pre-test score of experimental groups between posters, which suggests that creative writing skills have been developed by the use of the method of reading.

There is no substantial difference between the control group's pretest and posttest score, which means that the conventional approach does not promote the creative writing skills of learners.

There is a substantial difference between the experimental group's post-test score and the control group. This means that the form of reading is better than the conventional way of teaching students creative writing.

The concordance coefficient of both the experimental and control groups is similar to one, which reflects the overall agreement between the three examiners in the study-wide evaluation of the subjects.

There is no substantial difference between the performances of control group boys in pretest, and there is a significant difference in the posttest score between the performances of boys. This may be because of attrition among boys once again.

There is a significance difference between the scores of accuracy fluency flexibility and novelty of experimental and control groups in the posttest, which shows that the reading activities imparts more effectively the characteristics of creative writing.

The factor analysis shows the component of accuracy has dominance as compared to the other components.

There is a discrepancy of importance between the versatility of accuracy fluency scores and the novelty of post-test experimental and control groups, which indicates that the reading approach imparts the characteristics of creative writing more efficiently.

Compared to the other components, the factor analysis shows the component of precision has superiority.

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