

EFFECTS OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES ON WRITING SKILL AND ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY LEVEL EFL LEARNERS IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Iqra Shehzadi¹, Syed Kazim Shah²

¹MPhil Scholar, Department of Applied Linguistics,
Government College University Faisalabad
iqrashehzadi100@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics,
Government College University Faisalabad
kazimkazmi@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing is considered as the most challenging activity and the most difficult language skill among EFL learners. This experimental study looks at how creative activities affect the writing abilities and attitudes of ninth-grade learners toward English. The study's pre- and post-testing strategy involved one group. The study was conducted during four weeks in 2020- 2021 academic year in an English medium school of Faisalabad, Punjab. The study included 15 ninth grade students, 10 of them were females (66.7%) and 5 of them were males (33.3%). When pre and post test scores were examined, it was observed that the experiment raised students' efficiency in writing skill. Students' attitude to English course was also increased when compared after the experiment. Result revealed that using creative activities enhanced writing skill and also has a positive effect on attitude to English Language.

Keywords: *Creativity, Writing skill, Creative activities, EFL learner, English Language Attitudes*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing promotes pupils to focus on precise language use, according to Harmer (2004). It's because when students start their writing process, they take language use into account. It's generally known that the four language skills must be mastered by EFL students. Particularly, getting respectable authors on writing skill isn't an easy task for EFL learners. Given that writing is to operate

communicating information in writing, scholars must be well-informed before they can contribute (Suskie, 2018). Writing is significant as it's worn considerably in advanced teaching and in the place of work. If learners do not identify themselves in writing, they will not be capable to converse effectively with teachers or employers. Currently, writing skill is considered to be one of the most essential proficiency, so it's an important form of communication and a crucial part of education. Still, multiple EFL students struggle with their serious difficulties that prohibit them from producing high- quality essay writing.

Also Damiani et al. (2011) regards the writing skill as the process that calls planning, reflection and the association of ideas, in addition to the required exertion and attention that EFL students are invited to appreciate. Accordingly writing an essay isn't an unchallenged task that can be done in a certain time, writing an essay has to go through numerous different stages to get it done.(cited in English Forward, 2021). We learn to write through reading rather than writing, according to Krashen (2016). It implies that writing and reading are primarily tied to one another. Writing occupies a special place in language coaching since it requires practise and considerate of the additional three language expertise, similar to listening, reading, and speaking (Walsh, 2010). Writing is the transmission of studies in language through textbook, which requires the pen to have apprehensive of colorful aspects of writing similar as style, vocabulary, association and structure. Reading is a useful literacy tool that can enhance these aspects.

Indeed, studies have demonstrated that better readers make better writers, and better readers are more likely to have exposure to other languages than weaker readers (Belkhir and Benyelles). It is believed with the purpose of students who interpret supplementarily will also write more skillfully than persons who do not (Cottrell, 2017). For instance, it is evident that they will be unable to address the primary point of an argument in their writing if they are unable to do so when reading. Invoking and enhancing student performance in academic skills including the alphabet, vocabulary, spelling, reading, and writing is possible, according to Krashen (2004). (cited in Khoirunnisa et.al, 2018, p. 44). Reading was a crucial element of the writing process, in accordance with academic writing ability. The inspiration for writing comes from reading. Scholars focus on both the concepts and the examples of effective writing because they are aware that they will be writing on the material they have read. Additionally, the opportunity to write freely allowed students to observe favourable attitudes toward writing. (2006) Hany Ibrahim Additionally, reading and writing skills were intertwined, according to Khoirunnisa (2018), because reading was a necessary stage in the writing process for gathering information. Reading was a crucial activity that scholars should perform in regard to academic writing, for example, essay writing. They needed to read a ton of relevant materials that related to the

textbook they planned to write. They could then build their own argument based on selected references; (Elley, 1991's and Kennedy, 1994).

Allowing pupils to write as freely as possible in the morning of the literacy process and inspiring a sense of creativity in them is one of the greatest methods to encourage them to write. Writing skills can undoubtedly be developed by creative writing (see Janikova, 2005–2006; Zajicova, 2011; or Rico, 1984, as quoted in Walsh, 2010). Csikszentmihalyi(1997), defines creativity as “ any act, idea or product that changes an being discipline, or that transforms an being field into a new one ”(p. 28). It's basic to mortal study development and progress. It's the process of bringing individual new into being. The capability to approach with bright thoughts that are unexpected yet explainable and also important in a number of way is what is known as creativity (Boden 2001). The textbooks that students generate with their writing skills are a significant representation of the creative qualities of students in the educational environment. Because of this, creativity and note-taking ability are quite similar (Demir, 2013).

Creative writing, which is closely related to creativity, refers to the act of putting one's thoughts and feelings about a particular subject on paper while exercising complete freedom of the imagination (Oral, 2012). In order to increase writing's relevance, significance, and intrigue, we need to find ways to incorporate it with other experiences and conditioning. We must employ writing assignments that are pertinent, relevant, and founded in the needs and interests of our students. We might need to create unique assignments based on the writing requirements for each learner. Additionally, we should discuss writing with our students, including how to write well, why we write, for whom, and what makes it delicate (Monis & Rodriques, 2012). Creativity requires passion and commitment. Syllabus is an important part of tutoring methodology and it has experienced the changes through the processes of language class development and syllabus design whenever a disadvantage was associated in a syllabus type, a new syllabus type has come into reality.

This means that a syllabus with some creative conditioning cannot be stationary, but should be active and incorporate effective strategies from other syllabus types (Thayniath & Shabana, 2017). In many formal educational environments, creativity is undervalued while being essential to innovative thinking in all fields. Creative thought is required for all result materials and construction (Kaplan, 2019; Beghetto & Plucker, 2006). Classroom practices that concentrate on fostering creativity aren't as successful as awaited); the main factor could be the underutilization and inefficiency of classroom creativity in instruction and learning as cited in (Pang, 2015). Yet, nearly no academy teaches for creativity or train educationists to educate for creativity (Kaplan,D. 2019). A good learning environment always incorporates certain creative elements that

make the assignments more engaging and interactive. Students can be innovative and learn new things when creativity and academics are combined in the proper way.

The way students absorb knowledge and use it in their daily lives can be significantly changed by creative educational environments. In reality, a student's emotional development is greatly influenced by their ability to express themselves creatively. According to (Craft, 2004), taking a lengthy, knowledge-heavy class can be difficult for students who want to strengthen their creative thinking. "Modernization of the class" is a component of the restructuring and reform of educational systems (Coneroy et al, 2008,p. 3). In class ' imitation ' is being considered inadequate as an resultant (Kress, 2000, p. 138, as cited in Shaheen, 2011) and The demand for a course that emphasizes the development of creativity is being backed up (Martinsen, 2003). A class like that serves as the foundation for creating educational materials for use in the classroom (Shaheen, 2011). Creativity is mentioned in the National Curricula as commodity that should be developed in children (National Education Policy 1998- 2010).

However, it isn't explained why it should be cultivated through schooling or why it is important. This suggests that decision-makers are wary of the idea and eager to include it into schooling. The fact that the reasons are still not given may indicate that a global rhetorical trend is being blindly followed and that the desire to integrate creativity into education has not been based on a careful examination of the needs of the nation and how these will be satisfied if the development of creativity is an expected outcome of education. (Shaheen, 2011,p. 229). Presently, there is no special element in Pakistan's education strategy that fosters children's creativity. Creativity needs to be incorporated into the curriculum in order to keep up with the rest of the world and, more significantly, to better educate our children ideal (Nazir, 2020). Shaheen (2011) also stated that the government may aim to include creativity into the educational system based on the fact that it is addressed in both policy and course papers. It is thought to be a crucial quality. Though the policy and class documents don't give any clear description of inventiveness and the expression also vary in use transversely the class and this isn't specific to Pakistan only. It's a possibility that ideas about creativity may differ from those who are directly involved with seminars and with persons who place strategy and give coffers to take it out successfully (Feldman and Benjamin 2006, p. 332).

The addition of creative conditioning that foster learner's language skill is necessary in the class. Shaheen, (2011) stated that the cause why there's a require to give an functional description in the core curriculum and strategy documents is to the text inventors in Pakistan follow the class rule. The handbooks are in utmost cases the only tutoring substance used by preceptors and evaluation is

grounded lying on the contents of these. Therefore simply mentioning and not spelling out what originality means might have indictments meant for its addition in these handbooks.

If exercises are offered, they might be based on a varying understanding among various material inventors, which would incur fees for assessment. The text designers might not include any activities that would encourage creativity in children. Unfortunately, creativity exploration in a second language is still constrained, especially when writing. Writing is supposed to be the most grueling skill. Learners have duration towards writing. utmost of the scholars give up before starting jotting or they put off it as much as possible because jotting is tutored as a product skill and this induces fatigue, a drop in encouragement and failure. thus similar kind of class is needed in which Learners are introduced with creative conditioning through which they could enhance their writing skill.

The present study is affected by that of Tok and Kandemir (2012). They indicate that employment of inventive writing exercise is effectual in compounding scholars' writing accomplishment in English. On the additional, it's also set up that using creative writing conditioning has a encouraging consequence on writing dispositions of students. predicated on these outcome, they recommended that inspired writing conditioning can be used in English course to boost scholars ' achievement in writing skill and let them to write further. But the mean score acquired from attitude scale of the scholars who are attending English course has diminished after the experimentation. It's established that approach to English course aren't changed favorably. But they claim that this change is not statistically imperative. Still, one could argue that learning merely writing techniques may not have a significant impact on attitude about a course.

They claimed that the study had only been ongoing for 4 weeks; nevertheless, it may equally be argued that this short period of time is insufficient to affect a change in attitude. This may be due to the short amount of time allotted for the study, which prevented an attitude adjustment that would have been beneficial. (Tok & Kandemir, 2015). Dai (2010) claimed that the creative writing course gave students the flexibility to explore various facets of their lives, which improved their language skills, in a study that examined the teaching of creative writing in English to sophomores in a Chinese university. It has not only transformed students' habits of note-taking, but it has also allowed them to mature and get to know one another better. According to Erdoan (2012), who conducted a study to determine the benefits of creative writing, cooperative creative writing, and writing practices in the Primary Turkish Education Program on students' written expression, attitude toward writing, and preceptors' and academics' opinions of the course, there are significant differences between the experimental

and control groups' gain scores in favour of writing expression and attitude toward writing, which supports the experiment.

Significant differences were established supporting the first experimental group between the gain scores of the first and second experimental groups in favour of writing expressiveness and attitude toward writing. However, students' attitudes toward learning a second language have a substantial impact on their success (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). The attitude has been described as an evaluation of an attitudinal reality that can range from exceedingly negative to exceptionally favourable in social knowledge (Van, 2004). The definition of attitude given by Eagly and Chaiken in 1998 was "a cerebral inclination that's represented by judging a particular commodity with some degree of favour or dislike." For better evaluation, stations can be grouped under the 3 disciplines of cognitive, behavioural, and emotional. (Nabi, 1999).

One of the key elements in encouraging students' language literacy is their attitude toward studying English as a second language (Abidin et al., 2012). The intelligible, perception, and emotional aspects of one's attitude toward learning a little novel are recognized to be closely related. A behavioural point of attitude is concerned with how a learner behaves and reacts in a specific circumstances (Mohammadi Abidin, & Alzwari, 2012). (Akgün, Keskin, Byrne, & Aren, 2007) Literacy is permitted to be an emotional process.

When students infer gist by their own understandings of the commodity in certain specific conditions, action has an emotional impact on attitude (Gardner, 2002). Students' emotional ties to the particular language group or their innate interest about the second language are typically what draw them to learning a second language (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Momani (2009) examined the attitudes of secondary school students regarding studying English as a foreign language and their aptitude for reading. The results indicated that the respondents had neutrally good attitudes regarding picking up English. The students' stations for learning English and their performance in reading appreciation also showed a significant association. Shams (2008) also did a study in an effort to elucidate the attitudes of students toward English literacy in terms of encouragement and worry. The results highlighted the scholars' positive attitudes and intense excitement for English. This highlighted the positive attitudes most of them demonstrated toward the English language and its literacy, which in succession highlighted the importance of English language effectiveness in daily lives.

Purpose of the Study

This experimental research aims to examine how creative activities affect secondary level EFL learners' writing abilities and attitudes about the English

language. The results of various creative writing exercises are discussed in this study, which may be useful for curriculum designers and language instructors.

Research Questions

The study explores at investigating as to what influence do creative writing activities have on secondary level EFL students' attitudes as well as writing abilities. It therefore focuses on answering the following two questions:

1. How do creative exercises affect EFL students' writing abilities?
2. What kinds of exercises should teachers focus to foster creativity?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is consequential difference between student's pre and post test scores obtained in writing test.
2. There is consequential difference between students pre and post test results obtained from Attitude Scale.

Limitations

Only Secondary Level EFL Students of Punjab, Pakistan are included in this study. Four weeks were needed for the study's creative writing exercises, which were employed to collect the data.

Significance of the Study

Literature on systematic analysis, discussion, and conversation regarding the introduction of the importance of creative writing tasks for EFL learners is lacking in Pakistan. People generally admire the English language, and learning that children are learning it often inspires the common consumer to want to send his or her young ones to English-medium schools starting in the initial grades (Shamim, 2011).

Though, it is obvious that English is valued highly in Pakistan, and this has increased interest in learning the language there. This study was specifically created with the need for the nation to learn English and improve its English writing skills in mind. The Pakistani government is investing a lot of money in enhancing institutional programmes for English education at the primary through higher levels, but the expected results are lagging behind due to several gaps and a dearth of research data in the relevant field. The implications and uses of using creative activities to improve EFL students' writing skills were examined in this study, which may be useful for both syllabus designers and policy makers about teaching English as a foreign language. Teachers as well as secondary students at

this level could benefit from the research to have a better understanding of the EFL learning process. This investigation can also assist as an initial element for other academics interested in researching related subjects.

2. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, research group, data gathering methods, and experimentation process.

Research Design

To find the impacts of creative writing activities on writing competence and approach toward the English language, one of the pre-experiments designs with one group pre and post test was applied (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). A pre-test, a treatment, and a post-test are all included in this design (Creswell, 2003).

Research Group

15 ninth-grade students from an English-medium school in Faisalabad, Punjab, made up the sample group for this study. Five male students (% 33, 3) and ten female students (% 66, 7) took part in the study. They willingly agreed to participate in the study and were notified that they would not receive any extra credit for completing the creative writing exercises.

Data Collection Tools

Students were given a biographical writing assignment to complete in order to evaluate their writing abilities. Students are asked to write a few paragraphs in this assignment about a person whose life they are familiar with (Tok & Kandemir, 2015). The researcher grades the written assignments using a "Scoring Rubric" (adapted from Brown, 2007). There were 5 sections in the scoring table. The first section of the outline was given a score based on its content, with a possible 30 points. The organization is the second portion, with 20 being the highest point. Grammar makes up the third section of the profile, which has a 20-point maximum. With a maximum score of 15, the fourth part is for vocabulary use. The fifth and last section of the outline is for mechanics, which includes capitalization, punctuation, as well as spelling. The highest score total is 15.

In this study, the learners' standpoint toward learning the English language was assessed using the standardized attitude measure "Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language" by (Abidin et al., 2012). The measure has 45 separate items that are related to linguistic attitudes. The behavior, intellectual, as well as emotive facets of thoughts were used to categories the items into categories. Both positive and negative items are present on the scale.

For evaluating attitudes regarding English, there are 30 positive and 15 negative items. A five points Likert scale from strongly disagrees to strongly agree was used to score the questionnaire's many items. The scale has strong reliability, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.878 for the entire scale, 0.641 for the behavioral aspect, 0.632 for the cognitive aspect, and 0.677 for the emotional aspect.

Procedure

In the initial week, the researcher presented himself to the learners, explained the study to them, and let them know that only volunteers may participate in the study. Students who volunteered received the survey "Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language" as a pre-test. After that, a biography writing exercise was introduced and handed to the students with time allotted for it in order to gauge their writing proficiency. The particular exercise is regarded as a research pre-test. In order to foster a pleasurable and comfortable learning environment for students as well as a positive relationship between the researcher and the students, the investigator has informed the learners that they will not be given any results and that this will not influence their grades.

As a creative writing exercise in the second week, students are asked to "Write 100-150 words, describing your ideal place where you would like to go for holidays". Although the topic is given by the researcher but students are assured that they can write how they want. The researcher instructed the participants to initially visualize and use their imagination. Decide where, when, and with whom they will travel after that, and then write about your imagined vacation.

In the third week, two pictures were provided to the students. In the first picture there is snowfall depicting exquisite scene of winter season. There is a snowman wearing a pan on his head and a penguin standing in front of him and a boy is running towards them with joy. In the second picture there is a man sitting extraordinarily quiet on a wooden bridge across a lake, he is not doing any kind of activity just staring at the mountains in front of him. These pictures were provided to every student in this activity. Students are instructed to closely examine at and describe the first image. Students are asked to closely examine the second image and write a brief narrative about the scene, the man in it, why he is there by the lake, etc. Students could make up several scenarios based on either set of images and then discuss them with the researcher.

The fourth week is when students are expected to write a story, but the opening sentence is provided by the researcher. The researcher guided the student to start the story with this "She touched the little box in her pocket and smiled". (Obtained from www.creativewritingprompts.com).

All the activities were performed very well, Students were told that each piece of work is important and that they should really not worry about grades or anything else. Additionally, the researcher has consistently highlighted that the purpose of the study is to assess both the participants' writing abilities and the impact of the activities they participated in. Lastly the survey and the biography writing activity was perform again as a post test.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

Data assembled to observe the variation among the pre test and post test. T-test for paired samples were used for testing and interpreted data because in one group pre test-post test design paired sample t-test is used generally for the data analysis. Paired sample t-test reveal whether or not the mean of the pre and post test is significant (Borg & Gall, 1989; Roscoe,1975; cited in Balci, 2011). The approach used for data analysis in present study was influenced by that of (Tok & Kandemir, 2012).

Table 1: *Analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores for writing test (WT), and attitude scale (ATS).*

Test	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Pre-test Scores of WT	15	5.24	0.65	-12.82	0.00
Post-test scores of WT	15	8.88	0.30		
Pre-test Scores of ATS	15	3.05	0.11	-25.72	0.00
Post-test Scores of ATS	15	3.70	0.22		

The writing test score of the group differs significantly among the pre- and post-test, according to hypothesis 1 evaluated in this experiment. As a result, a parametric test called the t-test for paired samples was applied. The current study's conclusion is similar with that of Tok and Kandemir (2012). In Table 1, the investigation of the writing test's pre- and post-test results for the study group is shown. The study group's mean pre-test score was 5.24, and the standard deviation was 0.65, as shown in the table below. The mean post-test score for the study group was 8.88, and the standard deviation was 0.30. According to Table 1, there was a statistically considerable difference between the study group's pre- and post-test scores ($t=-12.82$; $p0.05$). As a result, Hypothesis 1 was proved.

The second hypothesis, which was also evaluated in this research, claimed because there was a large difference between the group's pre- and post-test results

with regard to attitude toward the English course. Consequently, a parametric test called the t-test for independent samples was applied. Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the pre- and the post-test results for study group's attitude toward the English course. The study group's mean pre-test score was 3.05, and the standard deviation was 0.11, according to this table. The mean post-test score for the study group was 3.70, and the standard deviation was 0.22. According to Table 1, there was a statistically significant difference between the study group's pre- and post-test scores concerning their attitude toward the English courses ($t=-25.72$; $p0.05$). As a result, Hypothesis 2 was approved.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The implementation of a creative writing strategy greatly improved students' ability to write in English, according to the t-test results, which supported the researcher's responses to the research questions. Results, however, also manifest that engaging in creative writing exercises improves attitudes about the English language. These findings imply that creative activities can be utilized to improve secondary level EFL learners' writing abilities and encourage them to write more.

The effect of creative activities on pupils' writing ability has furthermore been the focus of certain past studies. In their research, Tütüniş and Küçükali (2014) concentrated on the application of creative writing to enhance students' English writing abilities. They assert that instruction in creative writing has improved pupils' writing abilities. The results from the experimental and control groups differ significantly from one another. The findings show that the investigational group gained greatly from the research. Another research was carried out over the course of 8 weeks in 3 different schools employing a pre- and post-test design, investigation techniques, and innovative programming. Post-test results showed that the students' creative writing abilities and writing fluency had improved (Colantone et al., 1998). The experimental study was also carried out by Tok and Kandemir (2015) using a one group pretest and posttest methodology. Four weeks were spent doing the study. The first objective's findings show that following the experiment, pupils' writing achievement increased. The second objective's findings also show that the trial did not improve students' attitudes toward English classes. The outcome of this second objective conflicts with the current research. However, the outcome of the first goal was in line with the current investigation.

As has already been mentioned, the outcomes of this study confirm the findings of other earlier studies showing encouraging children to write creatively improves their writing abilities. Additionally, creative writing encourages learners to build their confidence by allowing them to express their ideas.

As a result, some recommendations for English language teachers can be made; it is suggested that creative writing exercises be incorporated into writing

lessons in English verbal communication classes. Additionally, writing ability be supposed to be extensively investigated and given the same consideration as other abilities. Additionally, it is advised that additional creative writing exercises be added to the English language course framework for secondary schools in Punjab. Both students and professors who teach writing courses can benefit from creative writing. It offers plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their writing abilities. T-test findings revealed that when students received creative writing instruction, their writing abilities significantly improved. This improvement in writing abilities benefits students' academic performance as well as their personal growth. Students are proud to showcase their original thoughts in this way. As a result, it might be seen as a component in increasing pupils' motivation. They pick up many methods for writing creatively. Writing courses will be more pleasurable, academic performance will also be boosted, and negative aspects like anxiety, fear of failure, and aversion to writing may be avoided when students and teachers are strongly motivated and eager to produce something creative. The syllabus of English language courses for all secondary level students should be modified, and various creative writing activities might be incorporated into the curriculum. It is also suggested that the creative writing method be incorporated into EFL writing lessons. A control group can be included in additional research to examine the full impact of the strategy, and a more thorough creative writing rubric may be constructed and used to grade creative writing assignments.

EFL teachers are expected to use splitting teaching strategies in their lectures to improve their students' positive attitudes toward learning the English language. To encourage the learners' attitude toward learning EFL, they must provide a motivating learning atmosphere in the classroom. Along with the daily lectures in the classroom, students can also be inspired to build their attitudes by connecting them in group projects, role plays, and other pertinent activities. The practical application of varied instructional activities and innovative teaching techniques in the classroom during lectures can increase students' interest in learning English as a necessary subject. The goal of communication strategies is to improve students' attitudes toward learning, and English teachers should be aware of this. To develop the English language instructors' aptitude, specific training programmes should be launched in collaboration with the satisfactory performance. In light of numerous researches pertaining to students' attitudes toward language learning, it is moreover advised that the English language core curriculum be modified in cooperation through the experts. The curriculum for teacher instruction courses should be rephrase over time while acknowledge the significance of students' attitudes toward learning the English language, it is advised for policymakers and curriculum creators.

In order to fulfill the requirements and interests of the learners, curriculum developers for EFL courses at the secondary level should also review the

curriculum's content and structure. The curriculum should be redesigned so that students can view the activities, information, and other issues from a new perspective.

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