



RESEARCH PAPER

Improving Creative Writing Skills through a Situational-Based Approach at the Elementary Level

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ABSTRACT

This experimental research aimed to upgrade the creative writing skills of elementary learners in private schools. It was observed that elementary students lack the capability to write a single paragraph in their own words. To address this issue this quantitative study was designed. This study has collected a sample of 10 students randomly and was categorized into experimental and control group. The pretest and posttest design was used measure the effectiveness of the test. The situational-based activity was introduced to the experimental group. This research has some limitations i.e. Not all public or private schools in Lahore were part of this research. The time and selection of the population sample are limited. This research is limited only to elementary students and might not apply to any other age group. The results show that this activity was helpful in boosting the creative writing skills of elementary pupils. This paper recommends that the creative writing skills of students can be enhanced by encouraging them to write their own piece of writing, giving students an opportunity to select topics, and introducing an activity-based teaching methodology. The teacher should discard the old traditional way of teaching English and should adapt practical approach.

KEYWORDS

Situational-Based Teaching, Creative Writing Skills, Elementary Learners, Pre- and Post-Tests, ELT

Introduction

The English language has been identified as a renowned language due to its increased adaptation of the English language as a lingua franca as a medium of teaching, knowledge, and social currency around the globe, and even in Pakistan. It is believed to be necessary to ensure enhanced potential, mobility, and people strive to attain competence in communicating. Language production is a major interpersonal skill in writing. Hyland (2003) is of the opinion that the performance on language development can be improved in writing academics. The text of a good ESL (English as a Second Language) author has to be consistent and rational, well-organized, involving, and correctly formatted with a vast knowledge and command of rules in mechanics. Garcia (2003, p. 149) recalls that the process of writing originates from an accomplishment in the brain, a global activity interrelated to others, and consists of transmitting borrowed words of another or the phenomenal memory of oneself, through the tracks, and the capacity to express oneself through narration. Akhtar N (2013) reveals that the process of writing is linked to the way that the learners acquire their language skills because one can demonstrate the progress in language learning when the progress in writing production is achieved. Writing is significant since it is employed in higher institutions as well as in places of work. Without understanding the way of expressing themselves by writing, students will not be able to deal with professors, employers, other students, or even with anybody in a good way. A big part

of professional communication goes through writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, initial interviews, emails, etc., are the ordinary reality of a college pupil or any other prosperous graduate.

Irrespective of all these, students at any level have a problem of learning and using it adequately to learn academically because English is the second language in Pakistan. The difficulties multiply for elementary-level students, especially in creative writing skills, for several reasons; English being a second language poses hurdles for them as conventional lecture methods emphasize only the theoretical use of language rather than practical usage, emphasis on rote learning, memorization of the text, and, most importantly discouragement of creativity at all levels of study. This kind of discouragement continues to kill the rational thinking among students, and it does not hone their creative skills to competence. This research hypothesis is that with the situation-based learning method, creative writing will be improved among students.

Situation-based learning has been tried as pedagogy in other disciplines and environments in many parts of the world and has been identified to be an effective teaching-learning process. In contrast to most of the traditional approaches, it engages pupils in the exercise of effective learning by discussing and resolving real problems, as well as sharing their ideas openly. The focus of the research is to boost the creative writing skills of elementary learners via guided imagery in the Pakistani context. This study would help students evolve adaptive thinking and interpreting of ideas into text by repetitive drills and developing a practice of writing on a daily basis. This study shows how students' creativity is encouraged when they are put in a situation. Their creativity would be enhanced when their mental abilities, i.e., imagination, find different ways to solve the problem. The learner-based language teaching methodology in situational-based language teaching is learner-centered, and the role of a teacher is that of facilitator and not master of the show, as in the case of other conventional teaching of languages. Students lack creative writing skills in the English language and are unable to produce a single paragraph in their own words. This study will encourage students to polish their thinking abilities and express their thoughts through writing. The Research Hypothesis is that the creative writing skills of elementary pupils can be improved by situational-based teaching.

Literature Review

The process of writing is developmental, which can be monitored and promoted. Students may take time before becoming competent when going through the typical developmental stages of moving from scrawling to traditional spelling. According to the activity of writing is a generative, exploratory, and non-linear action through which authors rediscover and refigure their notions as they endeavor to secure the interpretation. To this effect, the pupils will be required to reread their manuscripts according to the remarks given by their instructor and also those given by peers, since revision is a process whereby ideas become rearranged and reformulated. It is possible to succeed in writing when this process is considered as a recursive one, which implies developing intentions, drafting a publication, and responding.

Langan (2005) also agreed that writing is more about practice than talking. Also, there are other interactions expressed by other scholars on writing. As an example, Pearsall and Cunningham (1988) commended that writing is hard work. Nonetheless, according to Ramie and Alamirew G/ Mariam (2005), the problem of writing, or rather,

it is the least taught aptitude, which does not have a significant focus in teaching language achievement, is a fact.

In other words, writing is an exercise that needs to be undertaken very diligently; it should be a skill that is taught to address a reader. This means that writing is a challenging task, and it has to be trained well. And the talent of writing well does not come in naturally. Writing is a technology that aids skills that need to be exercised through experience (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 6).

Creativity in writing (i.e., the possibility to harmonize and communicate the thoughts in an indigenous way) can be exercised via

(a) guided visualization whereby the pupils are instructed on using what approach to create a cognitive image of an event and objects possessing high perceptual quality, which are later coded into the writing.

(b) being exposed to texts with good visualization and imagination to enhance the innovation of students in their writing.

(c) The equipping of unmediated perceptual encounters (e.g., touching items with various exterior characteristics, when you are blindfolded).

In a nutshell, imagination when writing is exacerbated when the pupils know how to report perceptual descriptions using colourful descriptive phrases (Jampole et al., 1991).

Kenny (2011) has analyzed a teaching approach for creative writing that was suitable for an ESL learner. He showed four key grounds for the need to wield creative writing in language learning classrooms as follows:

- Artistic Freedom: Kenny (2011) states that the majority of writing courses in the colleges are oriented towards grammar and form. It is less focused on using the creativity of students. This may consequently “lead to dissonance and poor levels of motivation” and leave writing activities to have little space in the development of thoughts, beliefs, and views. He, therefore, believes that creative writing tasks are directly related to the imaginations of learners since they give learners the opportunity to develop their imaginations in a spontaneous, immediate, and personal manner because of the interest and ideas learners have.
- Use of imagination: Kenny (2011) asserted that encouraging imagination and the adoption of creative methods and activities are very important things towards the growth of a human being. Helping the students to reach their creative minds and allowing them to express themselves will increase the levels of motivation among the students, besides stimulating them to develop fine learning habits.
- Emotional response: Kenny (2011) says the serious divergence between creative writing and factual writing is that in creative writing, it is possible to invoke an affective response in the apprentices, and the stimulation of an affective response can help learning.

- Relating the familiar and the unfamiliar: Creative writing can draw a connection between knowledge that already exists and new concepts and the unfamiliarity in linguistic forms.

Vishnu S. Rai says that Creative writing is exciting as it bursts the monotony of the class. It induces newness into the classroom as it aids learners to acquire language with fun. The significant aspect is that it raises their spirit and renders them confident that they can draft poetic verses and short stories in English. The same is the case with the instructors. When they start doing creative writing exercises, their self-esteem is fostered. (Kumar, 2012)

Alan Maley (2012) says that the following are some of the advantages of creative writing to the learners:

- Writing creatively supports language improvement (at the grammar, vocabulary, and phonology levels) and discourse.
- It brings about the concept of playfulness that makes learners riskier with the language, and not fearful of rebukes, to venture into it.
- Creative writing stresses the creative brain, with its stress on emotions, body sensations, instinct, and melody.
- Creative writing has the propensity to build assertiveness and self-regard in apprentices.
- Positive motivation also increases in a proportionate way through creative writing.
- The more creative reading feeds on creative writing. The creation of the text reveals to the learners how such texts can be used intuitively, and this fact gives such texts easier readability.
- Further, expository writing can be enhanced by creative writing.

Situational language teaching is a method worked out by British applied linguists such as Harold Palmer and A.S Hornsby between the 1930s and the 1960s. Although many teachers never heard of it, it once profoundly impacted language courses up to the 1980s. The Syllabus of Situational Language Teaching is structured on a word catalogue and structural enterprises. The teaching of grammar can be characterized by the situation, demonstration of new sentence templates, and training to practice motifs. The instructor goes from less controlled and progressively unconfined exercise of the frameworks to oral use of the sentence pattern and mechanical use of it in verbal articulation, comprehension, and composition.

As can be seen, according to Situational Language Teaching, a lesson begins by practicing stress and intonation, revision, and then the latest thing (normally structures or vocabulary) is presented. Then, the instructor goes on to the verbal exercise and drilling of the items introduced. The last part of a lesson is a reading activity or a written task.

This situation, according to the Situational Approach, as well as with the view to make sure that the language that is being learned is concrete, should come out of

some real situation or an imaginary real situation through the use of all words and sentences. In spite of the confinement of the classroom setting, the teacher must apply her/his creativity in the pretence of some situation picked up outside the classroom.

Within the theory that supports the Situational Approach, there are the following principles:

- The process of language learning is the formation of habits.
- Mistakes are bad and must be avoided since they constitute bad habits.
- The skills regarding language can easily be learnt in two forms; that is, they learn it first through oral language and then in prose format.
- Analysis is not a good basis for language learning, as analogy.
- The connotations of words can be comprehended only in a linguistic and demographical terrain.

Halliday on situational-based learning states that in acquiring the first language, we do not do so by learning how to utilize rules to know what to say; rather, with regard to situational-based learning, we learn how to go about a situation when we are acquiring our first language (Halliday et al., 1964).

1. An experimental study designed by Tok and Kandemir (2014) illustrates the outcomes of students who undergo creative writing practices. This study investigated learners' writing attitude towards English and their writing dispositions. This paper examined the impact of applying creative writing tasks in correspondence to writing skills in class 7 school children within a primary school in the premises of Denizli, Turkey. In 2013, 17 females and 14 males were part of the study circle. The paper findings demonstrated the efficiency of applying creative writing activities in enhancing class 7 pupils' advancement of writing skills in English. In addition to that, a positive impact on 7th-grade students' writing dispositions was also determined through creative writing activities. This study will determine the production of situation-based activities that are going to be used in primary classes in the English curriculum to enhance the accomplishment of students in composing written expressions.
2. Writing can also be improved because it is a competence. It can be done by studying via repetitive actions. Had the instructors understood the composition process, that would have worked in imparting proper methodologies and enhancing the writing skills of pupils in a learning setup (Oberman and Kapka, 2001). As such, the research studies carried out in Karachi on the primary level agreed that the students are poor in writing skills and that the teachers do not have any effective way of improving the situation. Thus, an attempt was made in this study to come up with an effective technique for teaching creative writing to pupils who are equal to the elementary level.
3. Nasir et al. (2013) formulated an action research project that was focused on enhancing learners' creative writing skills. They executed experimental research among students of Grade 5 with an eye to empowering pupils' writing proficiency. They improved the expressive writing abilities of students through

writing skill support strategies. However, these strategies are not mentioned in the research. However, this research is designed for improving the creative written expression of pupils through situation-based activities.

4. Vzair and Ismail (2009) conducted qualitative research about inculcating writing Skills in Early Childhood in Pakistan. They pointed out the incompetence of instructors in teaching basic English writing skills to learners. The teacher's ineffective methodology hinders creative writing skills in primary-level students. It also causes ambiguity in students' minds about different ideas and concepts. Consequently, the students cannot develop their thought processes and creative writing skills. This research is aimed at providing a meaningful teaching methodology to boost the creative writing skills of learners at the elementary level.
5. Cole and Feng (2015) have conducted research to investigate productive Strategies for enhancing the written expression of primary English Language Learners. In their work, they give evidence-based strategies, i.e., incorporation of technology, pre-introduced vocabulary, numerous teacher factors, and enactment of positive differentiated literacy practice to develop the creative writing power of students in elementary English as a New Language. This research will help refine skills in creative writing through situational-based activity.
6. López Nino and Varón Paez (2018) have carried out research about the analysis of methodologies using the framework of Literature and creativity. This study performed action research with a group of twenty-eight students who were enrolled in 5 grade in a Colombian public school. They helped them writing-in-English skills to be better by applying some writing-in-English creativity strategies. Such approaches were acrostics, figurative poems, comic strips, and placards, which linked children with fiction and real facts retrieved in areas that the kids were learning in school. It is a study to enhance creative writing using a situation-based approach.

Material and Methods

Experimental research design seems appropriate regarding the topic at hand. The data compiled through pre- and post-tests were analyzed by means of quantitative analysis. The teacher will design pre- and post-tests in order to find the difference between students' performance after introducing situational-based activity. Such a difference can be deducted through conducting tests in the classroom. The teacher will conduct a pre-test and a post-test to evaluate the results. The teacher will deliver the creative writing skills situational-based activity. In the classroom, the teacher will present to students a picture (guided imagery) and tell them to write unusual words. The learner will be requested to brainstorm on the concepts of the people in this picture (characters), where they are appearing (setting), what kind of war could be between them or their surroundings (what is happening around them), and how they could end these conflicts (conclusion). In this situational task, the students will write themselves about the story with the use of their imagination. A sample of 10 students at an elementary level of a private school was taken. 10 students were taken for each group: a control group and an experimental group. First of all, a pre-test was conducted for both the control group and the experimental group. After introducing the activity, a post-test

was performed by the experimental group. Then, after comparing the results of each group of pre- and post-tests, conclusions are made.

Results and Discussions

This section presents a detailed analysis of pre tests and post tests of the collected sample of students to determine the effectiveness of storytelling through visuals and giving students freehand to think about it.

Pre-Tests and Post-Tests

After taking the pre-test and post-test, the data is collected in the form of a table. Obtained marks of the pre-test are written in one column and of the post-test in another column. A comparison of the marks of both tests is made in a column titled

Difference. This column will suggest whether this methodology is effective for enhancing creative writing skills or not.

Group 1 (Control Group)

A pre-test was taken from the control group to SS their command of creative writing skills.

Interpretation of graphs/report writing

It is clear from the above statement that a situational-based approach facilitates both teachers and ESL learners to freely express their emotions in the form of creative writing. Creative writing can be easily and successfully taught through a situation-based approach. Creative writing is polished through repetitive drills, and the situation-based approach is based on habit formation (repetitive drills).

Table 1
Pre-test

Students	Total Marks	Pre-test (Obtained Marks)
A	10	6
B	10	6
C	10	5
D	10	6
E	10	7
F	10	7
G	10	7
H	10	5
I	10	8
J	10	7

It shows the mixed results of the students. Some students are good at creative writing skills, but many students lack this ability.

After the pre-test, a post-test of the control group was conducted.

Table 2
Post-Test

No of Students	Total Marks	Post-test (Obtained Marks)
A	10	6
B	10	6
C	10	6
D	10	6

E	10	7
F	10	7
G	10	7
H	10	5
I	10	8
J	10	7

Results of the post-test of the control group indicate that there is no change in students' performance. Their creative writing skills are approximately the same. Students show no progress as they are not entitled to any effective methodology.

Group 2 (Experimental Group)

Table 3
Pre-test

No of Students	Total Marks	Pre-test (Obtained Marks)
A	10	7
B	10	6
C	10	6
D	10	6
E	10	7
F	10	7
G	10	8
H	10	5
I	10	8
J	10	7

It shows the mixed results of the students. Some students are good at creative writing skills, but many students lack this ability. After the induction of the pre-test, students will be introduced to a situation-based activity.

Table 4
Post-test

Students	Total Marks	Post-test (Obtained Marks)
A	10	9
B	10	8
C	10	9
D	10	9
E	10	10
F	10	10
G	10	10
H	10	8
I	10	10
J	10	10

After introducing situation-based activities, students' marks have increased. They have shown better results than the pre-test.

Table 5
Comparison of Pre and Post-Tests

Total Marks	Obtained Marks Pre-Test	Obtained Marks Post-Test
10	7	9
10	6	8
10	6	9
10	6	9
10	7	10
10	7	10
10	8	10
10	5	8
10	8	10

10	7	10
100	67	93

A correlation of both pre- and post-tests of the experimental group shows that there is a sharp contrast between the performance of students before and after introducing the activity. Their creative writing skills have improved. Each student has shown improvement in his or her creative writing skills.

After analyzing the data, it can be determined that this activity was fruitful in improving the creative writing skills of the students. Each student showed positive development under this activity, as the post-test results of the experimental group increased. It validates the research hypothesis that situation-based activity or teaching helps improve the creative writing skills of elementary learners.

Conclusion

The aim of the study is to enhance creative writing skills via a situational-based approach. It can be seen from the results that this methodology has garnered positive responses from students. Students have shown better performance in the activity. Students are found to be interested in this activity. ESL learners are found engrossed in writing about their ideas instead of following the teacher's dictations about the story. It is clear from the above experiment that the situational-based approach facilitates both teachers and learners to freely express their thoughts in the form of creative writing. Creative writing can be easily and effectively taught through the situation-based approach. Creative writing is polished through repetitive drills. As the situational-based approach is based on habit formation, the teacher should practice this skill in the classroom regularly to achieve the desired results.

Recommendations

Students should be allowed to select the topic themselves and employ their own method of writing. Learners should be guided not to chase books, as it is (in the case of creative writing); rather, they should be encouraged to write themselves. Students should also be encouraged to write their pieces of writing, i.e., poems, short stories, or diaries. Later, the teacher would share their writing exactly with the whole class and appreciate them for their effort. It would increase their motivation to write more. This practice is outstanding because writing is a skill achieved only through practice. Also, it would help to develop their literary habits at a very young age. The teachers should be more creative in their approach to teaching methodology. She should discard the old traditional way of teaching English. Her approach should be more practical than theoretical. By using demonstrations like pictures, concrete objects, and audio-visual aids, she can make teaching more interesting and can grab students' attention. It would enhance their learning capabilities.

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