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Developing Students' Creativity in Writing Skills

Research Project

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to our parents, who work day and night and sacrifice their lives to provide us with everything we need. To our supervisor, whose instructions allowed us to complete this project. Lastly, we would like to dedicate this project to all the teachers who teach sincerely and those who try and strive to make a positive change for future generations.

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Section one

Introduction

Writing is considered to be one of the most vital language skills. In addition, it can be the most challenging one. It can be more than merely arranging words on a piece of paper. It is a process of conveying a message, delivering an idea, or demonstrating points of view. Furthermore, it is a form of communication which gives the reader a chance to read clearly and in a comprehensive way. According to Nunan (2003), writing is a tool for innovating ideas, taking into consideration the ways of communicating them and laying out them in a paragraph in a way that can be clear for the readers, all of these make writing an intellectual work. Furthermore, writing can aid the students to deal with the hurdles they might face in language areas and it leads them to think outside the box to produce solutions for any problem. “Writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use and, because they think as they write, it may well provoke language development as they resolve problems which writing puts into their minds” (Harmer, 2004, p. 31). Writing consists of several types, one of them is known as “Creative Writing” which is the type of writing that involves imaginative and artistic kinds of writing where the authors are given a chance to reveal their feelings, demonstrate their beliefs, and the way they think elegantly and independently that entices the reader’s focus. Kumar (2020) portrays creative writing as a conceptual feature that encompasses the number of activities that produce poetries and fiction where the author has the freedom to express their thoughts and feelings.

The purpose of this research is to identify teaching techniques that can be utilized inside the classroom where the instructor directs the students to think differently and enlightens the way for the students. Also, it is to shed light on several steps to start writing in creative ways that can be effective in promoting the students’ creativity in writing and expanding their knowledge in order to enable them to express themselves and their ideas in artful ways. Moreover, it will empower the students to be enrolled in critical thinking process, allowing them to face the challenges with confidence and find solutions.

Regarding the classification of this current study, it encompasses four sections. The first section introduces a general and comprehensive background of the title. Besides that, it discusses the purpose of conducting this research while the last part of the introduction refers to the classification of this current study. The second section, which includes the theoretical background that proposes necessary techniques for developing students' creativity in writing. The vital concentration of this study addresses the techniques and the steps that will work on enhancing students' critical thinking and leading them to deeper imagination and self-expression. The third section of this study refers to the journey of the researchers concerning the title, and the experience they gained throughout the activities and tasks they had or did either in college or school. Also, the reflection of the researchers is discussed in this section, their reflection about the efficiency of the activities they did or had, how they were beneficial, the negative and positive points, and what they obtained from the theoretical background. The last section is about conclusions and followed by a list of references.

Section Two

Theoretical Background

This section provides some necessary steps to start writing creatively, and a number of tips to follow regarding language proficiency and techniques both teachers and students can utilize.

2.1 The Main Techniques to Start Writing

The most challenging step that the writer might face while writing can be located in the first steps when the author feels strayed in a series of thoughts, and begins to panic. The starting point and finding what to write about is a must. Choosing a topic will ease the way for the author to begin writing and convey his message. Besides, having an enthralling scenario where the characters are engaged in the plot and events will capture the readers' interest. Finally, possessing a conflict is a must to increase the tension, dive the readers into events profoundly, and avoid the readers from boredom. To Hamand (2014), conceiving the head scene is like meeting of characters, having a dispute, finding out something, recognizing something notable, or dramatic actions occurring. The following are the main techniques one can commerce writing.

2.1.1 Brainstorming Ideas

Deciding what to write about is more difficult than one can imagine, it takes a considerable amount of time to think and brainstorm. The author might feel discombobulated about what idea can be the finest one to select to write about. Initially, one can write or create ideas about their troubles, their depression, and their suffering or about the hardship of other people. "Take something you feel strongly about, whether it is positive or negative, and write about it as though you love it. Go as far as you can, writing as though you love it, then flip over and write about the same thing as though you hate it" (Goldberg, 1986, p. 20). As a subtitle, you can talk about things that might look unfamiliar or whatever appears in the mind. The creative writers should not attempt to limit themselves while writing. The author should pay attention to the most controversial and debatable topics that arouse the reader's attention. Smith (2005) suggests that in order to get ideas and boost creativity, one should focus on arguable topics and social disputations, creative work deals with topics and issues that are related to psychology, politics, and philosophy.

2.1.2 Imagination

Imagination is an intellectual workforce where one can establish ideas or images of objects that are not promptly visible or available (Piirto, 2018). It is a way that the writer thinks outside the box and visualizes scenarios, characters, events, situations, meetings, and conversations to deliver them to the reader creatively and artistically. Reich (2018) describes imagination as a way that motivates one to think outside of their knowledge and a place where one is at ease, and it is a way of creating and empowering innovative thinking and novel ideas. Therefore, imagination is seen as a fundamental method in creative writing and fiction. The author should take the step to imagine beyond what might be ordinary and should go overboard to create events. Hence, the author should not set boundaries while he is in the process of imagination and should use his imagination excessively to produce a neat piece of writing. Most importantly, creative writing and creativity are directly linked with imagination and the process of creative writing which is described as an imaginative process. Imagination is the main focus of some frames such as poetry, drama, fiction, screenwriting, and easily understood writing (Dev et al., 2008). In addition, a study by Avramenko et al. (2018) proves that creative writing allows students to use their imagination.

2.1.3 Creating a Plot

Plot is the process of arranging a series of events in a sequenced and organized way. It consists of the introduction, central, and conclusion. Kiosses (2021) defines a plot as an energetic and analytical process that portrays narrative composition and reception, it includes artistic arranging of the narrative text in a thorough aesthetic integration of the start, middle, and the final stage. Also, it contains a conflict that aims to entice the readers' interests and curiosity where the characters are in a struggle with each other or with the circumstances. The author has to take his time to construct the writing, put the events in order, and avoid narrating the events in a disorganized way. Further, the author should be cautious of how the events move to reach the tension slowly without jumping to the conclusion immediately and take sufficient time to form the conflict since it is one of the main points in writing. The plot is a vital tool for the writers to use in order to construct a piece of writing and put events in order. As King (2000) describes the plot as the writer's jackhammer to unearth the fossil from the strong ground.

2.1.4 Creating Characters

Characters' role can be central in writing which outlines how the writing is viewed in the minds of readers. Mazzeo (2012) states that a character is an essential part that has specifications and qualities that define and shape their identities. Each piece of writing contains several characters who act in different manners. Furthermore, it is the central of literature, through characters and their behaviors one can conceive himself or herself as a part of the writing. To make it more interesting, some of the characters must possess negative characteristics for the reason to create sort of a conflict with those who hold positive characteristics. Thus, this excites the readers more. Bennett and Roylas (1995) state characters are the heartbeat of literature and means to arouse curiosity and interest, love and hate, admiration and condemnation. Also, one of the most productive ways to create characters is to get inspired by reality and use the surroundings of the author as the main characters in writing, the people who influence the author, or those who establish a kind of feelings for the author such as hate, love, or inspirations. According to Swain (1990), an effective way to build and create characters is to start with the environment, those whom the author has strong feelings for, people whom the author admires, who annoy the author, or those whom he hates. Besides, the author seeks to characterize the characters and create identities for them to create kind of differences among them, to lead them to tension, and make the writing more enthralling that encourages the readers to read and be engaged.

2.2 The Importance of Language Proficiency

The process of writing requires several elements and a sufficient amount of details and knowledge in the second language in order to start writing and gain creativity in writing. Writing in a second language is a complicated exercise that needs expertise in a couple of various areas, writing projects often concentrate on specific areas of skills and knowledge that are viewed as necessary to the whole process (Archibald, 2001). The students must collect as much as information they can about the second language and become more familiar with the second language's culture to write more like an indigenous writer and boost the level of their creativity.

2.2.1 Grammatical Knowledge

Grammar is a group of rules that prescribes how words come together in sentences to communicate ideas (Garner, 2016). The mastery of grammar is genuinely necessary to construct a piece of writing that can be understood and corrected. If the writing consists the grammatical mistakes, the reader is not able to comprehend the intention of the writer. It helps the reader to be aware of the timing of the story or novel according to the tense that is used in the writing. Having grammatical knowledge allows the students to form different sentences easily (Sacal and Potane, 2023). Also, the author must understand how the language functions and how the sentences are arranged in a grammatically correct form to not cause any confusion for the readers.

2.2.2 Punctuation Marks

“Punctuation is an elaborate curing system by which writers signal to their readers how to move smoothly through the prose. Used properly, punctuation helps writers achieve clarity and emphasis” (Garner, 2016, p. 345). Punctuation marks are seen as an efficient way to make the writing legible. Without the use of the punctuation marks or the misuse of them, the readers misunderstand the writing and it might change the meaning of the context. Baily (2011) explains that errorless punctuation and the use of capitalization drive the reader to comprehend the intention of the writer. Punctuation marks aid the writing to be more professional. As a result, the punctuation marks and their placement are looked at as important tools to form the writing and reveal the intention or the tone of the author. Thus, it’s considered to be important to beautify, enrich the writing, and construct an understood piece of writing. Lukeman (2006) states that working with punctuation will assist you to glimmer fresh ideas for your writing.

2.2.3 Word Choice

What words someone can choose to write down in order to express his or her standing point or thoughts can be supremely minor in terms of writing’s beauty and meaning. The good choice of words assists the author in making the writing more creative and rhythmical which makes it pleasing and appealing to hearing and reading. Also, it assists the author in making the writing more purposeful. McClanahan (1999) refers to word choice as a way of being precise about a picture, it is not only about choosing the right name for something but also it is about choosing words that give the exact image, manner, and emotion our story requires. Furthermore, Well-

chosen words help the writers create their own way of writing, which makes readers more impressed. This certainly increases the significance of the writer and his writings, which can be different and the focus of everyone's attention. The author might prefer using some specific words that aim to involve the readers emotionally and make the writing touchier to leave the readers with sentimental feelings or to give the writing a specific meaning that the writer desires to communicate. Bell (2007) describes word choice as a matter that not only asks to be precise but also the ability to rebuild the entire meaning. In addition, word choice plays a highly efficient role to make the writing more organized and enable the readers to perceive the writing in a better way. Danglli and Abazaj (2010) suggest that word choice is considered to be vital in producing logical and unified pieces of writing.

2.2.4 Figurative Language

Figurative language is a feature of linguistics that makes creative and expressive work more exciting to read, precisely for literary specialists (Nurzaiyanah et al., 2021). Figurative language is an artistic and expressive set of the language which is utilized to enhance the piece of writing and add a sense of allure to it. Also, Figurative language is a way of conveying an idea indirectly by associating it with something else or comparing something to another thing in order to deliver a message. Furthermore, Hutauruk (2019) points out that figurative language is utilized in an artistic way and not literary since it functions to separate the words from their usual meaning. Figurative language is used to go beyond what can be literal as a result of using a sense of exaggeration and comparison between two things that cannot be compared in reality. To illustrate more by an example: if the weather is rainy and the author uses the expression "*it rains cats and dogs*", it does not literally mean that the sky pours cats and dogs. But, it means that it rains heavily.

2.2.5 Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion and coherence are essential factors that students need to understand to make their writing understandable to the readers. Further, they help the writer to organize their thoughts and how to make the writing united. Harefa (2023) asserts that cohesion and coherence are two components that lead the text to be understood and organized orderly. Besides, Cohesion is about how the sentences are built together lexically and grammatically in order to make a well-understood piece

of writing. Cohesion deals with the precision of utilizing grammar in written text, it forms and links the lexical and grammatical rapport that permits the arrangement of sentences for a linked written text (Gunas et al., 2020). However, coherence demonstrates how ideas are connected with each other, all parts are united without causing any kind of confusion to the readers. The author should be logical while writing to connect the ideas and organize them in a clear manner where all of them are referring to the main idea to allow the reader to follow the writer's thought. Takriyanti et al. (2021) claim that coherence is established according to how ideas are logical and how the author depicts them.

2.3 Teacher's Techniques in The Classroom

The teacher's responsibility and role in the classroom are essential to result in making the teacher become the guider of the class and the one who determines the instructions to run the classroom smoothly. In addition, the teacher's techniques will enrich the students with enough information they need. Pinpointing suitable writing techniques in order to aid the students in their writing abilities is required to be taken into account by educators (Yulianawati et al., 2022). The following are the main techniques to use in the classroom to improve students' writing skills.

2.3.1 Free Writing

Thoughts when writing and free writing can aid the students to start with a considerable introduction (Isni, 2018). Free writing is a stage where students begin writing randomly, without having any restrictions or stress. The teachers use this technique in the class for the purpose of allowing students to think widely and creatively. Morar et al. (2019) characterize free writing as a tool that students can use for a period of time as a preview of creative writing. In addition, students do not overthink what to write about or question the quality of their work. Free writing assists them to write as much as they can without holding back and thinking about the quality of the writing. The activities of free writing are helpful in order to go on writing without stopping to overthink whether the words are suitable or right (Elbow, 1998). Also, free writing is motivating since students write over and over. In this way, students gain confidence to write more.

2.3.2 Peer Reviewing

Peer feedback means involving the students in the procedure of giving and obtaining ideas from one another, and it helps to offer productive comments and suggestions for better pieces of writing (Farrah, 2012). Teachers establish a cooperative classroom to assist the students to work together to allow the students to share their thoughts on each other's writing and the students think critically and creatively to give feedback on their classmates' work. The students might feel more comfortable working and observing each other than the teacher observes and tries to correct their mistakes. A study by Shokrpour and Jafari (2022) indicates that peer reviewing is more productive because students are more frank with each other than their facilitator.

2.3.3 Teacher Feedback

The feedback of the teacher is a way of assisting the students to become experienced writers by expanding the level of their confidence and supplying them with productive strategies to improve their writing skills (Khan, 2003, cited in Sultana and Yoko, 2021). Moreover, it is to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of the students or to correct the students' mistakes in the writing process. As an outcome, the feedback of the teacher contributes in fostering students' creativity in writing and stimulating their minds to think about great ideas. According to Silver and Lee (2007, as cited in Agbayahoun, 2016), teacher feedback is thought about as a necessary attribute in the process approach since it aids to identify students' shortcomings and excellences and inspires them during the writing process. Besides, Srichanyachon (2012) depicts that teacher comments on students' drafts help to refer to issues and create proposals for developing future papers.

In this section, the main techniques and steps to increase students' creativity in writing skills have been discussed. The experience and reflection of the researchers will be covered in the next section.

Section Three

Experience & Reflection

This section discusses the experience that the project writers gained regarding their title during their academic years at college or school. Moreover, it discovers the reflection of the project writer on their experience.

3.1 Experience

Writing skills are considered to be one of the most significant skills in a language that the teachers of schools should focus more on and find the ideal techniques to empower the students in writing. Developing writing skills with enhancing creativity in writing is necessary, as they help the students develop in different areas and skills of the language. In addition, writing skills and creativity in writing allow the students to communicate creatively and expressively. Nonetheless, the practice of writing was largely neglected by the teachers in the schools that the researchers attended and writing was only taught and utilized for dictation purposes.

The reason for ignoring writing skills has been questioned without having any certain answer. However, factors such as large class sizes, lack of technology and aids of all kinds, and poor time management play a fundamental role in ignoring writing skills.

In contrast, at college, it was totally different. Writing skills and the types of writing skills were taught as main topics and modules.

The decision to select this recent title wasn't random. The researchers chose this title based on some logical reasons. First of all, as English language students, we have been studying writing eagerly as one of the most essential modules. Writing is given much importance in our department. Also, we have a deep admiration for writing since we write and read extensively. For these reasons, choosing our current title was a wise and well-planned decision.

In the first year, we studied a module called "Writing Skills" which was taught by Mrs. Chinar Kamal, who perfectly instructed us and introduced the basics of writing skills such as punctuation marks, capitalizations, linkers, parts of paragraphs, and paragraph structure. She instructed us and taught us the most basic things, and the foundations of writing. In the first place, in order to encourage the students, she employed several techniques such as modeling or demonstrating

examples. Secondly, she used to ask us to write the first draft. After that, she applied some cooperative techniques that involved group and pair work to aid the students in checking and commenting on each other's work. Finally, she provided her last comment or feedback on students' work which supported the students to gain more experience and develop their writing skills day by day. In the second grade, we studied a module named "Essay Writing" and its types, email writing, and CV writing which also were taught by Mrs. Chinar Kamal. She applied the same techniques that she used in the first grade.

In the third grade, we studied a module named "Creative Writing" which was taught by Mr. Bukhari Abdullah. The module enhanced and worked to empower students' creativity in writing. We used to write poems, prose, quotes, and reflections on videos or pictures, he demonstrated pictures or videos and asked about what we saw in the picture and to write what we saw in a creative different way.

The techniques that Mr. Bukhari Abdullah implemented to direct us included imagination to think outside of the box and have some novel ideas. Besides, peer reviewing and feedback, and teacher's guide and comments were provided. Also, he taught us some necessary grammatical points to make our writing flawless and accurate. Lastly, we studied figurative language and the types of it to be more creative and expressive.

3.2 Reflection

Writing this research has developed our creativity in writing implicitly, as it required us to search thoroughly for the best ways to allow the students to write in artistic ways. Through the techniques we provided in theoretical background, we obtained enough information to develop our creativity in writing and collected thorough knowledge that we can use as future teachers to increase our students' creativity in writing skills.

The topics that we studied in the first year of the 'Writing Skills' module, were obviously fundamental and valuable since they helped us to become better, academic, and creative writers. We extremely acquired benefits and we became writers as we wrote excessively. It assisted us in learning how to write accurately. When/where/how to capitalize or how to use punctuation marks. The techniques that were employed have affected us in a positive way which resulted in making us good writers.

On the other hand, this module was not flawless. Surely, it held some negative points such as grammar, which was highly overlooked in this module and led the students to produce grammatically incorrect pieces of writing. Also, cohesion and coherence were not taught directly, they were explained through teacher's comments or instructions. It would have been preferable if they were taught as main topics in the module of "Writing Skills".

In the third grade in which "Creative Writing" was taught. The techniques that were used assisted us to the highest extent. The teacher asked us to look at the picture that is demonstrated and ask us to write whatever comes to our mind but he insisted on using cohesion and coherence in our writing to produce pieces of writing that are comprehensive. Also, he directed us to use a variety of vocabulary in our papers for the reason of beautify the writing and creating rhyme and rhythm in them. Besides, grammar was taught in this module to make our writing more accurate. Furthermore, figurative language was also taught and we were encouraged to use metaphorical and simile expressions in our writing to enrich our papers. The class was highly enjoyable and beneficial as a result of assisting us to be better and more creative writers.

The only negative point of this module was that it was taught only for one course which was a very short period of time.

To sum up, we would like to offer our suggestions to the English Department and the teachers who teach writing skills and creative writing as modules. Writing should be taught both directly and indirectly, involved in different modules. Moreover, grammar should be taught more adequately as a result of its importance in writing. It would help the students to create pieces of writing that are grammatically correct and understood. A good quantity of the students struggle at this point. Furthermore, in the "Creative Writing" module, we studied only for one semester which was not enough for us to acquire more experience and use our creativity widely.

In this section, the experience and the reflection of the researches have been identified. Also, the researchers finalized the section by adding some suggestions. In the next section, the researchers will summarize the study and add conclusion.

Section Four

Conclusions

The researchers in this section outline and summarize the aims and the importance of the current study. Also, the recap of each sections with identifying their finding will be mentioned.

Writing and developing creativity of writing have become one of the most recognizable things that students must acquire due to their value in conveying a message or communicating. Great writers can create an outstanding impression. A creative piece of writing can inform the readers about the elegance of the writer. Moreover, Writing is connected highly with our daily routines and activities. Socially, we use different kinds of writing tools to communicate such as emails, social media platforms, social writing platforms, and messaging apps.

In section two, several initiative techniques that students can take into account to start writing have been addressed. After that, the areas that the students should concentrate on before and while writing have been revealed. For the reason of making students' work more creative and accurate. Furthermore, by using the mentioned techniques, students can be empowered in the other areas of the language. They can employ the information that they acquire for writing in speaking, reading, or listening. Overall, they can develop in different areas of language through writing. Besides, a number of techniques that the teacher and the students should follow were discussed. The techniques allow for corporative work inside the class and make writing less difficult, as the students work together and comment on each other's work.

In section three, the researchers discussed about their own experience related to the title of this study, in schools and college. As well as with their reflection on the techniques that the teachers of the college implemented regarding the current title.

It is more than important to work on some techniques in order to put the students on the right track and direct them when and how to start writing. Also, it is a must that students work on their language proficiency and teachers try to guide them. Hence, students feel confident and form an accurate, comprehensive, and creative piece of writing. Moreover, the environment and tools utilized in the class by the teacher play an important role in developing students' creativity in the class.

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