

Investigating the Significance of Using Literature in Enhancing Creative Writing Skills from Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract:

This study aims at investigating the significance of using literature in Enhancing creative writing skills from Teachers' Perceptions .The study adopted the descriptive analytical method, the researcher collected data by using a questionnaire for (30) Sudanese secondary school teachers. To analyze the data the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).The findings of the study revealed that EFL Sudanese secondary students encounter creative writing difficulties when they write in English and teaching literature plays a crucial role in enhancing creative writing skills. In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that teachers should expose students to literature as teaching literature provides valuable authentic materials to develop the students' creative writing skills, enhances language acquisition , expands the students' language awareness, develops personal participation and contributes to the enrichment of culture and language, in addition, English language teachers should be trained on using different types of collaborative strategies in creative writing skills. Furthermore, teachers should raise the students' awareness about the importance of literature in enhancing creative writing skills.

Key words: creative writing skills, teaching literature, foreign language learning.

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تقصي أهمية استخدام الادب الإنجليزي لتعزيز مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية من وجهة نظر المعلمين. استخدمت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي و جمعت البيانات بواسطة الاستبانة التي وزعت علي (30) معلماً للغة الإنجليزية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية، استخدمت الباحثة برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعيه لتحليل البيانات. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هنالك صعوبات تواجه الطلاب في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية وان تدريس الادب يلعب دور أساسي في تعزيز مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية. بناء على تلك النتائج فإن الباحثة اوصت بأنه ينبغي على المعلمين تعريف طلاب للأدب حيث يتيح تدريس الأدب مواد أصلية قيمة لتطوير مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية لدى الطلاب ويعزز اكتساب اللغة، ويزيد من وعي الطلاب باللغة ويطور المشاركة الشخصية و يساهم في إثراء الثقافة واللغة. بالإضافة الى ذلك ، يجب تدريب معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية على استخدام أنواع مختلفة من الاستراتيجيات التعاونية في مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية، علاوة على ذلك، يجب على المعلمين زيادة وعي الطلاب بأهمية الأدب في تعزيز مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية، تدريس الأدب، تعلم اللغة الأجنبية.

Introduction: The idea that the ultimate goal of EFL teaching is to enable students to read effectively using the target language led many language teachers to believe that they should only teach their students reading skills. However, focusing

in providing students with reading skills only hinder their creative writing abilities. Recent trends of EFL teaching have shown that it is important to include literature as a part of EFL teaching as it provides learners with valuable authentic materials which extend their linguistic knowledge,

exposes them with a wide range of grammatical and vocabulary items, raises their language awareness, promotes understanding of the culture of the target language and develops their creative writing skills. Teaching literature is considered the most appropriate choice to enhance EFL Sudanese Secondary school students' creative writing skills.

Literature is a useful language source hence it serves to develop students' linguistic and literary skills. According to Hurst(1989¹) in teaching English as a foreign language literature has played a vital role in developing and enhancing creative writing skills as it displays a rich context of grammatical and lexical items as well as representing a large resource of prompts for written work.

Teaching literature does not only allow learners to receive information from their teachers (language input) but also gives them the chance to learn vocabulary and new language items that help them in language production (language output).

In this paper the researcher tries to investigate the causes of creative writing difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students , propose some suitable solutions to overcome them and evaluates the impact of teaching literature in enhancing creative writing skills.

Statement of the problem :The researcher has noticed that many EFL learners (Sudanese secondary school students) face numerous serious deficiencies in creative writing ; they have limited knowledge of vocabulary, weak argumentation skills ,poor awareness of features of written English. Furthermore, when it comes to doing exercises based on creative writing, they are observed to be very poor performers,

resulting in comparatively poor achievement, too,hence they need to improve their creative writing skills , so the purpose of this study is to identify the causes of creative writing problems, suggest solutions and to investigate the impact of teaching literature in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' creative writing skills.

Objectives of the Study : This study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the causes of the problem and suggest some suitable solutions to overcome these creative writing skills difficulties.
2. To find out how can teaching literature improve EFL Sudanese secondary school students' creative writing skills.

Questions of the Study: The following research questions formed the basis of the study:

1. What are the causes of creative writing difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students?
2. How can teaching literature improve EFL Sudanese secondary school students' creative writing skills.

Hypotheses of the Study

- 1.Creative writing difficulties are attributed to many factors.
- 2.Teaching literature improves EFL Sudanese secondary school students' creative writing skills.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons:

It contributes to the existing literature in the field of teaching creative writing skills. Teachers will have a better understanding of their students writing difficulties and examine their own teaching techniques and materials, accordingly.

Learners can identify their problems and be aware of the factors that contribute to their difficulties and can apply the right strategies and techniques of creative writing.

The study shall also form a point of departure for syllabus designers and educators in the field of their specializations.

Limits of the Study : This study is limited to EFL Sudanese secondary teachers during the academic year (2020-2021) in order to investigate the causes of creative writing difficulties and propose some suitable solutions to overcome them and evaluate the role of teaching literature in enhancing creative writing skills.

Methodology of the Study :As has been mentioned, the purpose of this study is to investigate the causes and solutions of creative writing difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students and to evaluate the role of literature in enhancing EFL creative writing skills, to achieve this goal and in an attempt to answer the study questions, data has been collected through using a questionnaire which was administered to (30) professional Sudanese secondary school teachers who have long experience in teaching English and doing research in English. Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS.

Teaching Literature and Creative Writing skills : A true literature syllabus does not simply use literary texts to develop students' literary competence but also uses advanced language which is related to classroom practice. Brumfit and Carter (1985) stated that although the texts being used are literary, the primary intention is to teach language not literature. This suggests that using literature in EFL

classrooms assists the development of language skills, and the text may be used as context for exemplification and discussion of linguistic items which have no bearing on the value of the work as students read, enjoy and are willing to perceive a literary text as important in relation to their own understanding of themselves and the world. To achieve this goals syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote good conditions for learning that make reading literature purposeful because a literary response can't be given by a teacher it can only arise by the reading of the text.

Brumfit and Carter (1985) remarked that if literature is included in the syllabus to develop the language skills of the students, communication principles can be applied to the teaching of any skill because of the wide varieties of classroom activities and exercise types discussed in literature. According to Brumfit, (1985: 162) "Literature gives evidence of the widest variety of syntax, the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination and skills". Therefore, literature syllabus provides examples of language employed at its effective, subtle and suggestive ways hence it serves as encouragement, guide, target to the presently, limited linguistic achievement of EFL students.

The Impact of Teaching Literature in Enhancing EFL Creative Writing
Teaching literature encourages students to be better creative writers because it requires a close examination of the elements of the story such as characterization, setting, point of view, style, tone, ...etc. hence reading literary materials can be used as a medium for practicing creative writing skills.

The teaching of literature is mainly based on the use of literary texts in the classrooms. Literature provides students with the experience of creative writing as they discover not only isolated texts but a whole body of knowledge, discussed in relation to experience gained from literature.

Another value of teaching literature is that it motivates the learner for it gives him pleasure by being transmitted to the fictional world whether it is natural, social or individual interests.

Furthermore, literary texts include a great deal of other information sources of stimulation including historical and journalistic materials, samples of other artistic forms, accounts of scientific, technical and sociological aspects. For example, to read English newspaper or a novel requires mastery of several words that the limited vocabulary which learnt during the first few years of English study will not serve for wider reading. Therefore, through literature EFL students acquire vocabulary of necessary proportion rapidly and effectively.

According to Morley(2007) reading literature such as novels and poems is the reason behind the wish of many individuals become a good creative writer. McKay(1980) asserted that literature increases all language skills for literature enhances linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of widespread and rich vocabulary usage and complex and exact syntax.

Likewise, Collie and Slator (1987) believed that literature provides valuable authentic materials to develop the students' personal participation and contributes to the enrichment of culture and language.

Lazar (2006) pointed out that literature should be seen as a valuable source of motivating materials that would provide access to cultural background as it enhances language acquisition , expands the students' language awareness and abilities to interpretation hence it stimulates the imagination of learners, develops their critical abilities and increases their emotional awareness.

Stern (2001) suggested that literature can be a rich and inspiring source for writing: for both as a model and a subject matter , as a model can be found in students' writing which closely resemble the original works or great literary writers or imitate the content theme organization or style. As a subject matter literature can be displayed by the students in their demonstration of original thinking, interpretation or analysis all of which may have evolved from or have been inspired by literary works they have read. According to Oster(1989) literature exposes learners to coherent and expert writing which helps in better creative writing as reading literary texts by different writers is believed to introduce the learners to different writing styles which in turns encourage learners to develop their own creative writing style. Chenfled (1978:211) stated the importance of literature by saying "Through literature we can learn about ourselves , other people , other places and other times. We dip into the wisdom of accumulated human knowledge; we gain insights into human situations, social and historical events, through literature we discover what is possible in human experience and imagination, and our own lives grow in richness and depth".

Salih(1989:25) argued that literature helps students to develop their language knowledge and improves what they know about English syntax, morphology, semantics and implicitly phonetics. This indicates that through literature students can distinguish acceptable sentences from unacceptable ones, they can learn to write infinite set of sentences they have never heard before and they can improve their knowledge about word formation and idioms.

Obediat(1997:32) indicated that literature helps students to acquire a native-like competence in English creative writing skills, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely and concisely and become more proficient, creative, and analytical learners.

Bobkina(2014) stated that the latest developments in the field of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, discourse analysis and psycholinguistics revealed some additional benefits that can be attributed to literary texts.

Langer(1997) declared that teaching literature helps students to write creatively about their lives and their surrounding world, opening "horizons of possibility, allowing them to question, interpret, connect, and explore".

According to Mart(2016) literature has been considered as a valuable resource in language instruction and provides learners with various advantages:

1.Literature improves learners' linguistic knowledge as it extends their vocabulary

and grammatical structures. This suggests that using literature in EFL classrooms enriches students' creative writing language skills.

2. Literature provides meaningful input which enables EFL learners to develop their linguistic competence. Pugh(1989) argued that literature is "a potentially rich source of meaningful input outside the classroom".

3. Literature increases students' language awareness as literary texts widens students' knowledge about how words are used in different contexts, thus students can use words appropriately when they start to write.

4. Literature provides authentic materials which expose learners with real life-like situations.

5. Literature enhances students' communicative competence. Collie and Slater(1987) claimed that language and literature are integrated "to let the students derive the benefits of communication and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable work of literature".

6. Literature exposes EFL learners to the culture of the target language.

7. Literature develops EFL learners interpretive skills as it helps learners to draw inferences from the context.

8. Literature helps social development as it includes universal themes that are related to the world's issues.

Oda(2009) stated that teaching literature is an important factor in creating an intimate relationship between the learner and the literary work, and between the learner and the language on the other side.

Widdowson (1975:73) declared that literature occupies a significant part of language teaching programs because it provides learners with the ability to master the basic activities. In addition, it can draw an imaginative world and create an interesting life that makes the learner interact with the writer.

Badawi(2021) concluded that Storytelling affects positively on enriching basic school students' vocabulary and retaining basic school students' vocabulary. Implementing story telling strategies facilitates teaching and learning English skills and mastering blissful phrases. Storytelling strategies motivate learners and stimulate critical and creative thinking among young learners

Davies(1985:189) argued that literature leads to enriching the linguistic level. A great consciousness of the full range of possibilities for variation offered by the language, in addition, literature makes the students more sensitive to the way a particular writer selects from and exploits these possibilities and quicker to recognize what is special about the style of a literary text.

Maley(1989) stated the importance of the following criteria in support of the use of literature in language classrooms:

1. Universality: This includes global topics such as love, death, pride , jealousy..etc.

2. Non-triviality: Literature does not trivialize , but provides readers with genuine and authentic input.

3. Personal relevance: Literary texts commonly deal with events, ideas, feelings and emotions that may conform to a real or imaginative part of the reader's experience.

4. Interest: EFL learners find literary texts interesting as they are part of the human global experience.

5. Imaginative power: Literature is an ideal tool for generating topics for class debates.

6. Ambiguity: Literature is opened to subjectivity and association of ideas and guarantees class debates.

All in all , literature plays a crucial role in enhancing EFL students' linguistic competence as it provides them with all the aspects of the language and enable them to practice their creative writing skills.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The questionnaire consists of two parts, part one contains twelve statements which investigate the causes of the difficulties that EFL learners face in creative writing, the second part consists of twelve statements to discuss some solutions and to evaluate the impact of teaching literature in enhancing creative writing skills. The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents who represent the teachers' community at Sudanese secondary schools.

Table (1) the mean and standard deviation and chi-square values for the study Hypothesis:

1. Creative writing difficulties are attributed to many factors.

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	Teachers' lack of analytical and evaluative approach large , unmanageable class size, traditional pedagogy and students' weak academic background can negatively affect creative writing skills of EFL students.	3.6	.80	29	0.023
2	Schools and universities pay more attention to grammar, reading and vocabulary rather than creative writing skills; they do not consider creative writing an important part of their course books	2.4	.50	28	0.010
3	EFL learners find creative writing skills difficult due to effects of L1 transfer , lack of reading , practice and motivation and self- confidence.	3.3	.70	23	0.006
4	Lack and inconsistent feedback from teachers leads to some difficulties in creative writing	2.5	3.8	15	0.046
5	EFL learners find it very challenging to obtain sufficient and relevant source information, paraphrase and summarize information, and they can not use an appropriate writing style.	3.4	2.5	22	0.000
6	Outdated textbooks that neither promote the importance of creative writing skills ,or give the opportunity to the students to practice writing affect students' creative writing skills.	2.8	1.7	12	0.000
7	Weakness of students in lexis, semantics and syntax lead to some creative writing difficulties	2.9	4.8	34	0.000
8	The main problems of creative writing skills come from the students' proficiency level besides task's clarity and students' concentration	2.7	.50	22	0.000
9	Lack of background knowledge can cause great difficulty in creative writing skills	2.9	.70	32	0.023

	since language is used to convey beliefs ,facts ,opinions , cultures and rules .				
10	Psychological and physical features can also affect effective creative writing skills ; students may feel tired and lose concentrations when they are asked to do very long tasks	2.6	.50	22	0.036
11	EFL learners face creative writing difficulties due to improper development of analytical and cognitive skills of the learners.	3.6	.80	22	0.023
12	Students' lack of awareness of different aspects such as content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling lead to poor creative writing skills	3.4	.50	28	0.010

It is clear from the above table that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the (12) statements are greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents. According to the above findings , we can say that EFL Sudanese secondary students face some problems in creative writing skills because of the above factors, so the first hypotheses of the study is verified.

Table (2) Chi-Square Test Results for Respondents' Answers of the Questions of the study Hypothesis No (2)

2.Teaching literature improves EFL Sudanese secondary school students' creative writing skills.

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	When teaching creative writing, the teacher's aim should be to teach rather than to test the students' ability of creative writing skills.	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
2	Teaching literature gives evidence of the widest variety of syntax, the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination and skills	2.5	2.6	17	0.00
3	Teaching literature encourages students to be better creative writers because it requires a close examination of the elements of the story such as	2.4	2.4	13	0.00

	characterization, setting, point of view, style, tone, ...etc				
4	Literature exposes learners to coherent and expert writing which helps in better creative writing as reading literary texts by different writers is believed to introduce the learners to different writing styles which in turns encourage learners to develop their own creative writing style.	3	.80	25	0.03
5	Teachers should encourage students to learn the language through experience with the language itself as they apply the rules of grammar usage, and punctuation hence they should use language inventively	2.9	1.6	20	0.00
6	Creative writing activities should be planned around students' interests	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
7	In order to improve their creative writing skills, students need to practice as without sufficient practice students can never develop their creative writing skills.	2.5	1.4	17	0.00
8	Syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote good conditions for learning	2.7	2.6	15	0.00
9	To teach creative writing effectively teachers should follow the diagnostic approach which suggests that both teachers and students have different roles in the learning process.	3.6	.80	29	0.023
10	The teacher needs to present different types of tasks and gives students some techniques and strategies about how to deal with them before they start writing.	2.4	.50	28	0.010
11	Literature provides students with the experience of creative writing as they discover not only isolated texts but a whole body of knowledge, discussed in relation to experience gained from literature	2.7	2.6	15	0.00

12	Literature is a valuable source of motivating materials as it enhances language acquisition , expands the students' language awareness and abilities to interpretation .	3.6	.80	29	0.023
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Source: The researcher from applied study, SPSS 24

From the above table, it is obvious that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the 12 statements is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, so the second hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

According to the findings of the questionnaire which conveys the views of teachers about the problem of the study, EFL Sudanese secondary school students face serious problems in creative writing due to many causes such as the following:

- Teachers' lack of analytical and evaluative approach large , unmanageable class size, traditional pedagogy and students' weak academic background negatively affect creative writing skills of EFL students.
- EFL learners find creative writing skills difficult due to effects of L1 transfer , lack of reading , practice , motivation and self- confidence.
- Lack and inconsistent feedback from teachers leads to some difficulties in creative writing skills.
- EFL learners find it very challenging to obtain sufficient and relevant source information, paraphrase and summarize information, and they can not use an appropriate writing style.

- Outdated textbooks that neither promote the importance of creative writing skills ,or give the opportunity to the students to practice writing affect students' creative writing skills.

- Weakness of students in lexis, semantics and syntax lead to some creative writing difficulties.

- The main problems of creative writing skills come from the students' proficiency level besides task's clarity and students' concentration.

- Lack of background knowledge cause great difficulty in creative writing skills since language is used to convey beliefs ,facts ,opinions , cultures and rules .

- Students' lack of awareness of different aspects such as content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling lead to creative writing skills.

- EFL learners face creative writing difficulties due to improper development of analytical and cognitive skills of the learners.

According to the responses of the teachers to the questionnaire, the following are some suggestions to overcome creative writing difficulties and to use literature to enhance creative writing :-

- When teaching creative writing, the teacher's aim should be to teach rather than to test the students' ability of creative writing skills.

- In order to improve their creative writing skills, students need to practice as without sufficient practice students can never develop their creative writing skills.

- Syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote good conditions for learning.

- Teaching literature gives evidence of the widest variety of syntax, the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination and skills.

- Teaching literature encourages students to be better creative writers because it requires a close examination of the elements of the story such as characterization, setting, point of view, style, tone, ...etc..

- Teachers should encourage students to learn the language through experience with the language itself as they apply the rules of grammar usage, and punctuation hence they should use language inventively

- Creative writing activities should be planned around students' interests.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following points :

- Teaching literature provides valuable authentic materials to develop the students' creative writing, personal participation and contributes to the enrichment of culture and language.

- Literature is a valuable source of motivating materials that would provide access to cultural background as it enhances language acquisition , expands the students' language awareness and abilities to interpretation hence it stimulates the imagination of learners develop their critical abilities and increase their emotional awareness.

- English language teachers should be trained on using different types of collaborative strategies in EFL creative writing skills.

- EFL students should practice collaborative learning strategies. Curriculum designers must take into their account the importance of using collaborative learning strategies in the syllables of different stages.

- Students should be aware of the importance of creative writing skills in the process of foreign language learning .

- Students should learn and practice new vocabulary and expressions.

- Students should practice the grammatical structures they are taught.

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