



Available Online

Journal of Education and Social Studies

ISSN: 2789-8075 (Online), 2789-8067 (Print)

<https://www.scienceimpactpub.com/jess>

DEVELOPING THE TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS THROUGH SHORT STORIES AT MATRICULATION LEVEL

Gulzar Bibi

Department of English Literature and Linguistics, University of Punjab, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Language is a powerful tool for promoting nationalism and national unity. It is a key element of culture and plays a vital role in shaping nationality and ethnicity. Language learning is categorized into four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are all highly significant in the field of applied linguistics. This study is aimed at the development of teaching creative writing skills through short stories at the secondary school level. This study was delimited to the Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzang, Lahore. A total of ten students from class 10 were chosen at random, and a total of six observations were chosen to be observed during the study period. Various data collection techniques were employed during the study, such as class observations, practical teaching to a group of students, and a teacher's questionnaire. Results indicated that classrooms were transformed into more enjoyable and practical places due to the research activity. A difference was noted among students in terms of entry and exit marks. Interestingly, the exit marks after the end of the activity were found to increase as compared to the entry exam. This shows that practical and engaging activities significantly impact the students' writing skills.

Keywords: Writing; Teaching; Learning; Creative writing; Classroom; Reading; Skills.

** Email: gulzarbanopu66@gmail.com*

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<https://doi.org/10.52223/jess.2024.5239>

Received: March 07, 2024; Revised: June 20, 2024; Accepted: June 27, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

English is a compulsory subject from grade six in government schools and becomes the medium of instruction by grade eleven (Manan & Channa, 2016). In elite schools, however, English is introduced from kindergarten and serves as the medium of instruction from the outset. Similarly, military colleges and academies use English for instruction, and the majority of post-secondary scientific and professional exams are administered in English. Students and parents recognize that securing a white-collar job is nearly impossible without proficiency in English. Even students excelling in Urdu may struggle to obtain executive roles in the government unless they are fluent in English. Graduates of English-medium schools primarily fill top bureaucratic positions, while Urdu-medium students often end up in lower-level teaching or clerical jobs. Entrance exams for professional colleges are also conducted in English, giving English-medium students an advantage (Hussain & Manat, 2021; Khattak, 2014; Kalsoom et al., 2020).

Fluency in spoken and written English is essential for securing desirable public and private positions (Akhter, 2022). The leading newspapers in Pakistan are published in English, reflecting a higher standard than Urdu dailies, influencing their readers' mindset, approach, and analytical skills (Jabeen et al., 2024). In this context, English is seen as crucial for success in Pakistan, embedded in the nation's heritage and consciousness due to historical and sociopolitical circumstances. Given the global dominance of English, it

remains indispensable for accessing knowledge and opportunities, with no other language likely to challenge its position in the foreseeable future (Sadiku, 2015).

Language skills are divided into four essential areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, all crucial in applied linguistics. Listening and speaking are fundamental for oral communication, while reading and writing are vital for written communication. Speaking and writing are active, productive skills that require proper vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and fluency. In contrast, reading and listening are passive, receptive skills that focus on recognizing vocabulary and understanding grammatical patterns (Faraj, 2015; Magyar et al., 2022). These skills are interconnected and cannot function in isolation. To achieve fluency in spoken or written English, all four skills must be equally prioritized, with particular emphasis on writing, which is the most complex and commonly used form of communication in Pakistan.

A short story-based program enhanced the creative writing skills of first-year secondary school students (ElMahdy et al., 2019). The metaphorming approach is used in developing teaching materials for short story writing to enhance students' writing skills (Suwartini et al., 2022). Collaborative short story writing activities positively affect writing success in undergraduate English Language Teaching students (Kurt et al., 2022). In this context, this study assessed the development of teaching practices for creative English learning among students.

METHODOLOGY

Context of Study

The study's population consisted of students from Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzang, Lahore. Several factors influenced the selection of this school for the research. The most crucial step was obtaining permission from the relevant authorities, which was granted by the Directorate of Education, Punjab, allowing the study to be completed within a week.

Sampling

Sampling involves selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population to represent that group in a study. The selected group is the sample, while the larger group is the population. The purpose of sampling is to gather insights about a population without studying every individual. For this research, 10 students from the 10th class were chosen using random sampling based on a "mixed ability" criterion to ensure accurate results. The researcher met with the school principal to discuss the study plan, and the experiment was conducted over one week in October with the Matriculation students.

Data collection techniques

The study utilized multiple data collection techniques, including an experimental research design and observation methodology, incorporating quantitative methods. To fully understand the research problem, the researcher gathered information not only from what participants said but also from their actions, reactions, and behaviors. This required the researcher to be an attentive observer, empathetic listener, and neutral analyst. Data was collected through classroom observations, direct teaching, and evaluating students' group performance.

Classroom Observations

All 10th-grade students were observed, and ten were selected for the study based on varying levels of English writing abilities. Six story topics, one for each day, were distributed among the selected students. An entrance test was conducted before the lecture to assess their initial understanding. A brief ten-minute lecture was then delivered to clarify key concepts, followed by a ten-minute revision period before the students began writing their stories. Afterward, an exit test was administered to evaluate their progress.

Techniques and Strategies

The teaching method used was short story reading, where students were asked to read the text. Challenging words were clarified in Urdu, and the entire lesson was translated into Urdu to enhance

understanding. The teacher also asked students to explain the meanings of some challenging words during the lesson. An entrance test was conducted before the lecture, and an exit test followed after the lesson to assess student progress.

Classroom Observation No.1		Classroom Observation No.2	
Class:	X	Class:	X
Teacher /researcher:	GulzarBibi	Teacher /researcher:	Gulzar Bibi
No. of Students:	10	No. of Students:	10
Date:	17-10-2016	Date:	18-10-2016
Story Name:	An Ant and a Dove	Story Name:	Honesty is the Best Policy
Objective:	Developing creative writing skills	Objective:	Developing creative writing skills
Total time:	50 minutes	Total time:	50 minutes
Entrance Test Time:	15 minutes	Entrance Test Time:	15 minutes
Lecture Time:	10 minutes	Lecture Time:	10 minutes
Revision Time:	10 minutes	Revision Time:	10 minutes
Exit Test Time:	15 minutes	Exit Test Time:	15 minutes
School. Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzang, Lahore,		School: Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzang, Lahore	
Classroom Observation No.3		Classroom Observation No.4	
Class:	X	Class:	X
Teacher /researcher:	Gulzar Bibi	Teacher /researcher:	Gulzar Bibi
No. of Students:	10	No. of Students:	10
Date:	19-10-2016	Date:	20-10-2016
Story Name:	Greed is Curse	Story Name:	Union is Strength
Objective:	Developing creative writing skills	Objective:	Developing creative writing skills
Total time:	50 minutes	Total time:	50 minutes
Entrance Test Time:	15 minutes	Entrance Test Time:	15 minutes
Lecture Time:	10 minutes	Lecture Time:	10 minutes
Revision Time:	10 minutes	Revision Time:	10 minutes
Exit Test Time:	15 minutes	Exit Test Time:	15 minutes
School:	Govt. Girls	School:	Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzang, Lahore
Secondary School, 4-Mouzang, Lahore			
Classroom Observation No.5		Classroom Observation No.6	
Class:	X	Class:	X
Teacher /researcher:	Gulzar Bibi	Teacher /researcher:	Gulzar Bibi
No. of Students:	10	No. of Students:	10
Date:	21-10-2016	Date:	21-10-2016
Story Name:	Pride Hath a Fall	Story Name:	Haste Makes Waste
Objective:	Developing creative writing skills	Objective:	Developing creative writing skills

Total time:	50 minutes	Total time:	50 minutes
Entrance Test Time:	15 minutes	Entrance Test Time:	15 minutes
Lecture Time:	10 minutes	Lecture Time:	10 minutes
Revision Time:	10 minutes	Revision Time:	10 minutes
Exit Test Time:	15 minutes	Exit Test Time:	15 minutes
School: Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzung, Lahore		School: Govt. Girls Secondary School, 4-Mouzung, Lahore	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Entry-exit surveys provide a more truthful representation of students' perceived attainment of the intended learning outcomes than traditional course-end evaluations (Ng et al., 2016). According to El Hassan et al. (2021) students had inferior performance in the exit exam compared to corresponding coursework, with a moderate degree of correlation at the program level. In our study, the observations also indicated a difference in students' entry and exit scores. This implies that post-implementation of the writing activities, the scores of the students, especially the exit scores, increased as compared to the entry scores. This indicates that writing practices significantly impacted students' scores and skills.

Observation 1: The performance in the exit tests is excellent as compared to the performance in entrance tests. The student has a passing percentage in only the fifth observation, and the results in exit tests are promising.

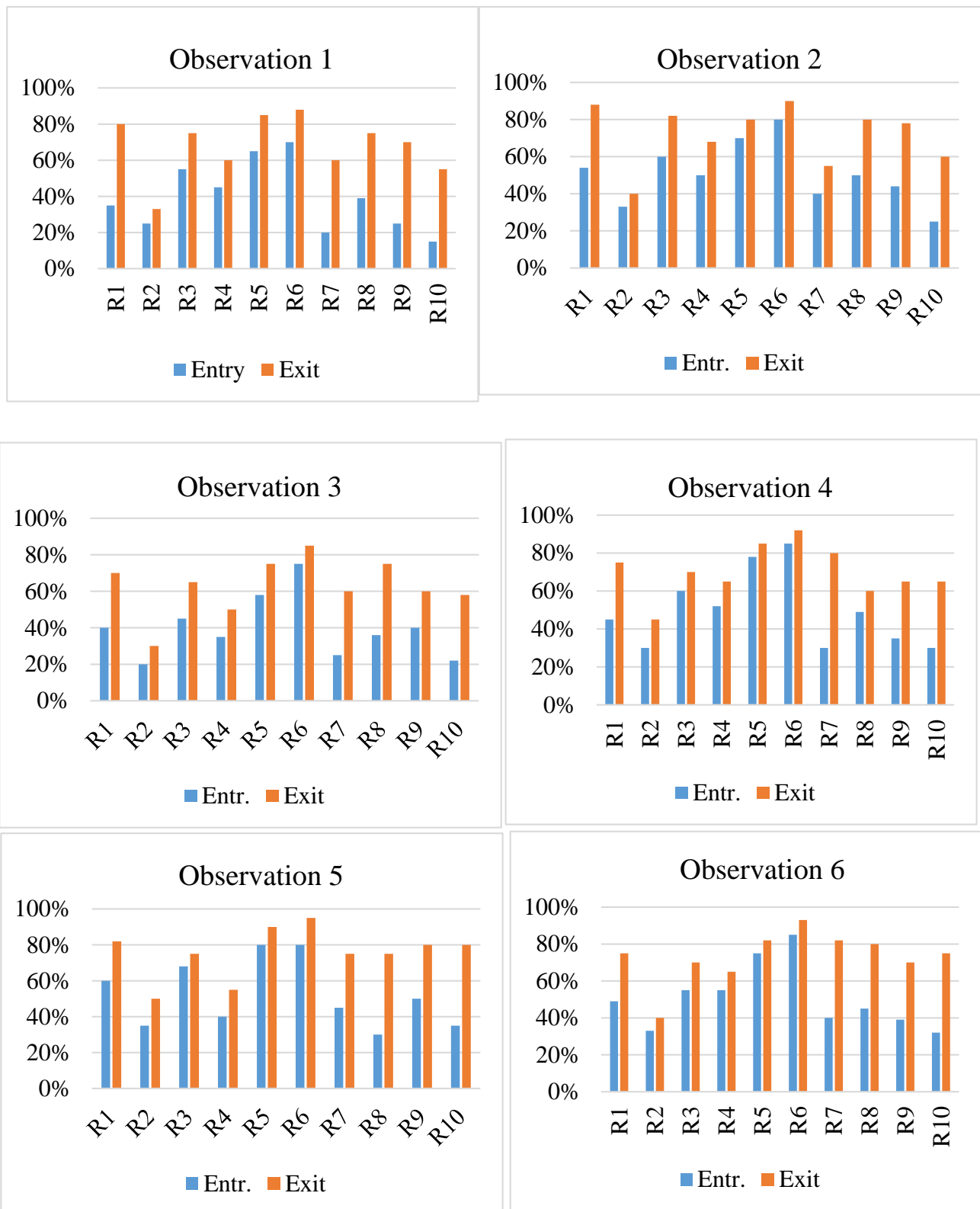
Observation 2: The performance in the exit tests is excellent as compared to the performance in entrance tests. This shows a variation in the entry and exit exam. The student has a passing percentage in only the fifth observation, and the results in exit tests are promising as compared to the entry exam.

Observation 3: The performance in the exit tests is excellent as compared to the performance in entrance tests. The student has a passing percentage in only the fifth observation, and the results in exit tests are promising. Students R6, R5, and R1 had the highest exit scores.

Observation 4: in this observation, again, there was a significant difference in students' entry and exit scores. The performance in the exit tests is very good as compared to the performance entrance tests. The student has a passing percentage in only the fifth observation, and the results in exit tests are promising.

Observation 5: The performance in the exit tests is very good as compared to the performance in entrance tests. The student has a passing percentage in only the fifth observation, and the results in exit tests are promising. In this observation, students R6 and R5 were leading in exit scores, whereas students R8 and R1 were lowest in exit scores.

Observation 6: The performance in the exit tests is very good as compared to the performance in entrance tests. The student has a passing percentage in only the fifth observation, and the results in exit tests are promising. There was variation in entry and exit exam scores. Students were leading in the exit cores as compared to entry scores.



CONCLUSIONS

The experience was creative and enjoyable for the researcher, who found the process engaging. The students and teachers showed great interest, as it was a novel experience for them, leaving many amazed. They asked numerous questions about the value and impact of using authentic materials in the classroom. These materials sparked a significant amount of interest and activated their creativity. Each piece, such as cartoons, advertisements, weather reports, and horoscopes, was packed with information. After examining

these excerpts closely, students found it easier to write, as the materials inspired various ideas. It allowed them to choose topics that resonated with their interests, freeing them from the monotonous textbook content. The classroom transformed into a more enjoyable space, where students were not confined to a single direction but could interpret the materials in ways that aligned with their individual perspectives.

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