



## ROLE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ENHANCING CREATIVE WRITING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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### ABSTRACT

In order to best understand English literature and be involved and equipped of carrying out such critical work or analysis it is essential to first consider how texts are written before they come into being. Therefore, this study investigates to establish a theoretical approach to undergraduate creative writing development through teaching English literature. The study sample consists of 100 English language majoring third year university students. This paper presents from pre-test and post-test results of the students' creative short story writing tests. Generally, the results showed that teaching English literature and reading literary texts can enhance students' creative short story writing and develops creative imagination. The results also revealed that students develop their language use when writing. The results showed further that teaching literature can also improve better use of literary techniques, figures of speech and literary elements in creative writing.

**Keywords:** Teaching Literature, Creative writing, short stories, literary techniques, literary elements, Figures of speech.

### Article Info:

Article Received:15/11/2014

Revised on: 22/11/2014

Accepted on: 26/11/2014

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### INTRODUCTION

The study of literature does not only enhance the four language skills( reading, writing, listening and speaking) but also reading literature from different periods add understanding to human

experiences and values. Teaching and reading different literary genres can contribute to enhancing students' creative writing. In this regard literature is considered to be the core of language learning. Here stems the need for further investigation for the role

of English literature in enhancing creative writing short stories and dramatic scenes.

**Statement of the problem:** The relationship between English literature studies and creative writing is closely interrelated. This relationship is the prime purpose of the study, for creative writing is the art of writing literature. To explore such correlation and how these relationships operate and help in understanding the literature of the past and benefit from that by producing new writings are the key questions of this study. Therefore, it will be attempted to investigate these relationships and underline the importance of the English literature and its role on enhancing creative writing skills.

**Literature Review:** Literature is seen as a resource which provides linguistic opportunities by providing essential language learning opportunities and help stimulating learners' personal intellectual growth through the encouragement of self awareness and perceiving the world around them. The learners are given information and the history of literature, traditions, heritage, nature of influences and the relationship between authors and context. On the other hand, literature within academic or institutionalized setting focuses on acquisition of qualification in literary studies. Critical concepts literary conventions are used instead in talking and writing about literature. In the following, different benefits of literature will be discussed.

In this context, there are many benefits in using literature where English is taught as second or foreign language. A part from offering a distinct and rich literary world and developing other skills, it can be used as a backup for developing creative writing skills. Frank, (1995) asserted that literature is the best stimulator for creative writing. Therefore, Frank urges language educators to make it a vehicle for familiarizing their students with literature in all its forms. Frank believes that literature is the best means to stimulate and encourage students to write. Hence, he calls on teachers to use English literature for the development of their students' writing skills and make of them successful, creative professional writers.

Morley, David (2007) points out that reading works of literature, such as novels and poems, is the reason behind the wish of many individuals to become a writer. McKay (1980) argues that literature will increase all language skills, for literature enhances linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of widespread and rich vocabulary usage and complex and exact syntax. Littlewood (1986) who observed that notwithstanding the fact that literary texts were predominantly valuable for developing language skills, it could further be exploited for the purposes of explaining grammar and indicating various types of language usage.

Likewise, Collie and Slater (1987) are in favor of the inclusion of literature in classroom language teaching. They claim that literature provides valuable authentic material and develops the students' personal participation and contributes to the enrichment of culture and language. O'Sullivan, (1991) believed that since literature has the power to develop the students' creativity and imagination, it is only natural to include it in language teaching. Principally, the aim of teaching literature is to increase the students' abilities and confidence through the study of literary texts.

Likewise, Lazar (1993) pointed out that literature should be seen as valuable resource of motivating material that would provide access to cultural background. Further, Lazar believes that literature enhances language acquisition, expands the students' language awareness and abilities of interpretation. She thinks that the use of literary texts in language teaching, provide the students with the cultural knowledge about the target language and its use in context. It also helps good interpretation. She believes that teaching literature can help to stimulate the imagination of learners, develop their critical abilities and increase their emotional awareness.

Smith, Hazel (2006) asserts that creative writing used to be treated like a poor relation to literary studies within higher education. Literary texts were the prime object of attention, and students were given no opportunity to write such texts themselves. Even for the benefit of literary

study this was unfortunate, because it is possible to learn a great deal about literary texts by creating them. To understand the activity of writing is to appreciate more the writers' work, the choices they make and their use of language. Writing is often a means of becoming a more informed and critical reader.

Stern (2001) has also supported the view that literature can be a rich and inspiring source for writing; both as a model and as a subject matter. Literature as a model can be found in the students' writings which will closely resemble the original works or great literary writers or imitate the content, theme, organization or style. Literature as a subject matter 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 the literary works they have read. Stern believes that the learners' writing is better improved when they are exposed to literary texts.

Oster (1989) asserts that literature exposes the learners to coherent and expert writing which fact helps in better writing. Reading literary texts by different authors is believed to introduce the learners to different writing styles; and this will, in turn, insight learners and encourage them to develop their own writing styles.

To stress the importance of creative writing to the students' achievements, Tompkins (1982) points out that there are seven reasons for requiring the students to write stories and poetry: To foster artistic expressions, to explore the functions and value of writing, to stimulate imagination, to clarify thinking, to search for identity and to learn to read and write. Creative writing enhances the general writing skills among students. Richards, (1990) pointed out that writing is a requirement at every level of the students' academic pursuit and is not entirely limited to language and literature. This serves the objective of writing programmes, which is to enable the students to produce different kinds of writings.

Creative writing develops critical reading skills. In support of this, Kramsch (1993) has observed that creative writing leads to more creative reading. By being engaged with what they are writing the learners are expected to reach the level of intuitive understanding of how the texts function, which fact makes similar texts easier to read.

Bastrukmen and Lewis (2002) assert that the notion of success in learning English creative writing is associated with self-expressions, the flow of ideas, outsider expectations, growing confidence and enjoyment of academic writing. They believe that good writing involves the ability to express ideas clearly and confidently to readers. Also, they stress that creative writing enables the students to express themselves more efficiently and with great confidence.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Pre-test and post-test were used to find out the progress of the students' creative writing through teaching literature and reading literary texts. 100 students have participated in this study.

In order to prove the importance of teaching literature in enhancing creative writing, students' creative short story writing test as a second tool for the study was used. To explore the role of teaching literature in students' performance in writing stories, pre-test and post-tests were used. In the pre-test students were asked to write a short story using their own imagination and creativity. This means that the text should be authentic material rather than a copy of existing text. This test was administered at the beginning of the semester before students were exposed to the literature courses. It is therefore, used as a diagnostic test to measure the extent to which students were able to write a short story.

On the other hand, post-test was used to examine the efficiency of literature courses reading literary texts on students' creative writing enhancement. It is therefore, administered after students were taught literature courses including

figurative language, story elements and literary techniques. In the pre-test as well students were asked to write a short story of their own imagination to compare if there any development in their writing after they were engaged in reading literary texts and having studied literature courses. In the following the test scores will be discussed in detail.

**Data analysis and Discussions:**

In the following students' performance in using literary elements will be discussed in detail. The discussion will compare the results of pre-test and post-test.

Table (4:1): Frequency distribution of students' pre and post-test score of literary elements.

1. Literary Elements:	Excellent		V.good		Fair		Poor		upper		lower	
	pre	post	Pre	post	pre	post	Pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
(i) Setting.	13.0	42.0	30.0	34.0	25.0	7.0	12.0	1.0	47.0	76.0	37.0	8.0
(ii) Characters	11.0	24.0	17.0	30.0	20.0	6.0	14.0	3.0	28.0	54.0	34.0	9.0
(iii) Plot	9.0	31.0	18.0	32.0	26.0	16.0	11.0	2.0	27.0	63.0	37.0	18.0
(iv) Conflict	9.0	16.0	13.0	38.0	33.0	11.0	17.0	6.0	22.0	54.0	50.0	17.0
(v) Theme.	10.0	30.0	18.0	23.0	29.0	19.0	20.0	5.0	28.0	53.0	49.0	24.0

As shown in table (4:1) there is a significance difference between students performance in pre-test and post-test, concerning literary elements. There is general development in the students' story writing in post-test when compared to pre-test results.

In their short story writing, the students' description of the story setting is developed. Students' achievement is higher in post-test when compared to students' performance in pre-test. In pre-test the percentage of upper performance (Excellent, Very good) was (47.0) while in post-test it was (76.0). And lower marks (fair+poor) were decreased in post-test by 8.0% when compared to pre-test which was 37.0%. This difference reflects the improvement of students abilities in describing the time and place where and when the story takes place.

As shown in table (4:1) above, there is significant difference between the students' score in the pre-test and post-test performance. The students used better characterization in the post test, and their score was (54.0) while in the pre-test it was (28.0). They used the main character and other minor characters. The students' achievement was also enhanced in the element of the plot structure in the post-test (63.0) when compared to the pre-test which was (27.0) . They used introduction to the plot, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.

Regarding the conflict, as shown in table (4:1) above, it is clear that the students have made good progress on the scores of the post-test (54.0) which is better than the pre-test (22.0). The students scored good results in the post-test in conflict and how to create suspense. The stories of the students contained useful themes in the post-test (53.0) compared to the pre-test (28.0). This result shows that theme were stated better in the post-test than in the pre-test.

Generally, literary elements are very essential in writing stories. They refer to the elements of storytelling that are common to the short story and novel. For example, every story includes setting, plot, conflict, theme, and point of view. The writer uses these literary elements to write a story, and the reader, in turn, uses these elements to critically analyze the story. As shown above students used the story elements more efficiently in the post-test. All literary elements seem to have been well stated after students were exposed to reading Wuthering Heights and after the discussions most of the students developed their way of writing. This result confirms the significance of literature in enhancing creative writing. The students have made good use of existing literature in order to produce new stories which were authentic in terms of ideas and literary elements.

Table (4:2): Frequency distribution of students' pre-test and post-test score of using literary techniques.

2. Literary techniques:	Excellent		V.good		Fair		Poor		upper		lower	
	pre	post	Pre	post	pre	post	Pre	Post	pre	post	pre	post
(i) imagery	6.0	30.0	13.0	30.0	28.0	10.0	21.0	3.0	18.0	60.0	49.0	13.0
(ii) metaphor	2.0	23.0	6.0	29.0	25.0	17.0	46.0	9.0	8.0	52.0	71.0	26.0
(iii) Narrative perspective	2.0	23.0	6.0	30.0	25.0	35.0	46.0	12.0	8.0	53.0	71.0	47.0
(iv)symbols	2.0	15.0	8.0	19.0	35.0	31.0	47.0	10.0	10.0	34.0	82.0	41.0
(v) other Figures of speech	2.0	9.0	8.0	19.0	35.0	30.0	47.0	20.0	10.0	28.0	82.0	50.0

As shown in table (4:2) there is a significant difference in the percentage of the students' score in the pre-test and post-test. The students' score was higher in the post-test. This means that they developed the skill of using images, metaphors, narrative perspectives, symbols and other figures of speech.

As for imagery, the students' score was higher in the post-test. They succeeded in creating better images in their writing compared to their performance in the pre-test. The percentage of using visual and auditory images was higher in the post-test (60.0) than that of pre-test (18.0). This result shows the ability to manipulate the influences of images and visual pictures in creating effect. The improvement came after the students were exposed to the chosen literary textbook.

Regarding the students' use of metaphors, there is a significant difference in the scores. The students use of some metaphors and similes was developed in the post-test (52.0) compared to the score of the pre-test (8.0). In narrative perspective the students' narration of the stories was better in the post-test 53.0 than in the pre-test score (8.0). This result shows that the students have made good use of the narrative techniques of the literary text they have read, which fact confirms the role of literary texts in enhancing creative writing. There is also slight development in the use of symbols in the post-test (34.0) compared to the pre-test (10.0). The students have used many symbols in the post-test as a result of what they have learnt from the assigned literary

works. The use of other figures of speech was enhanced, as is shown in the post-test score (28.0) compared to the pre-test score 10.0. In the post-test the students developed good strategies in using other figures of speech such as similes and personification.

As stated above, teaching literature and reading literary texts play an important role in enhancing university students' creative writing. The result of the test reveals that the students created effective images. There is a clear development in the students' use of different figures of speech and metaphors in particular.

The score of the test also revealed that the students have used a better narrative technique. This includes holding correct points of view and adopting better ways for narrating the story. Furthermore, the result of the post-test reveals that the students have made a progress on the use of symbols in their story writing.

Generally, the above result shows that the students use of better literary techniques has been developed in the post-test in contrast to the pre-test scores. This development is attributed to teaching literature and the literary text to which the students were exposed prior to the post-test. This positive result confirms that teaching literature effectively contributes to enhancing creative story writing. It also confirms using suitable literary texts will contribute to developing writing creativity and enhance the students' creative imagination which leads to developing story writing creatively.

The Table (4:3): Frequency distribution of students' pre-test and post-test results of Language use.

<b>3. Language use</b>	Excellent		V.good		Fair		poor		upper		lower	
	pre	post	Pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
(i) flowery language	6.0	41.0	19.0	26.0	30.0	27.0	12.0	6.0	25.0	67.0	42.0	33.0
(ii) idioms	3.0	16.0	5.0	23.0	34.0	25.0	42.0	12.0	8.0	39.0	76.0	37.0
(iii) grammar	7.0	22.0	25.0	52.0	19.0	24.0	2.0	2.0	32.0	74.0	34.0	46.0
(iv) Punctuation.	6.0	15.0	26.0	41.0	27.0	11.0	9.0	1.0	32.0	56.0	36.0	12.0
(v) spelling	6.0	27.0	26.0	42.0	27.0	24.0	9.0	7.0	32.0	69.0	36.0	31.0

Source: data analysis

As shown in table (4:3) there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test in the students' language use performance. The use of flowery language post-test result was (67.0) which is higher than pre-test score (33.0). This result confirms that the students were able to use better literary language in the post test.

The use of idioms was also developed by the students in the post-test (39.0) which is higher than the pre-test score (8.0). The students have made better use of idiomatic expressions in their story writing in the post-test. Although few idioms were used by the students, their use was better in the post-test. The test results also show that the students' score in using correct grammatical structures is better in the post-test (74.0), compared to the pre-test score (32.0). This does not mean that there were no grammatical errors but there was apparent drop in the errors committed by the students in the post-test score.

Regarding the use of punctuation, as shown in table (4:3), precision and effective punctuation usage is developed in the post-test (56.0) which is higher than that of the pre-test score (32.0). This result underlines the progress in the students' writing after they were exposed to literature courses and reading of the prescribed literary texts.

Finally, in the post-test the students performance score in spelling is higher (69.0) compared to the pre-test (32.0). This result shows that the students' errors in spelling was minimized in the post-test, which fact confirms the importance of literary texts in developing and improving the students' spelling and contribute to the general skills of writing.

This result shows that reading and teaching literature has a positive impact on the students' language development. As a result, the students have used more flowery language, better idioms, good grammatical structures, effective punctuations and correct spelling.

Table (4:4): Frequency distribution of students' pre-test and post-test results of writing creativity.

<b>4. Writing creativity:</b>	Excellent		V.good		Fair		poor		upper		lower	
	pre	post	Pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
(i) Originality.	11.0	42.0	23.0	29.0	26.0	20.0	8.0	3.0	34.0	71.0	34.0	23.0
(ii) authenticity	11.0	36.0	15.0	23.0	30.0	22.0	11.0	9.0	26.0	59.0	41.0	31.0
(iii) Vocabulary.	4.0	18.0	17.0	36.0	25.0	11.0	10.0	1.0	21.0	54.0	35.0	12.0
(iv) coherence.	4.0	24.0	7.0	24.0	45.0	20.0	11.0	3.0	11.0	48.0	56.0	23.0
(V)Organization	7.0	32.0	19.0	18.0	36.0	22.0	16.0	2.0	26.0	50.0	52.0	24.0

Source: data analysis

As shown in table (4:9) there is significant difference in the score of the students' pre-test and post-test. The students' performance is enhanced in the post-test.

Regarding originality of ideas, as shown in table (4:4), there is apparent development in the students' performance in adopting the method of using their own imagination in their story writing. The post-test score percentage is (71.0) which is higher than the pre-test score percentage (34.0). This result shows that the students used their own ideas in writing the short story, after they were exposed to the literary text and engaged in literature courses. As for the authenticity of the written texts, the students were able to produce better authentic of texts in the post-test (59.0), compared to the pre-test score (26.0). This result shows that the students were able to write their own stories without copying already existing stories as in the post-test.

The test score shows that the students have made good vocabulary usage in context and used coherent and appropriate style in their story writing in the post-test. The post-test score was (54.0) in the use of vocabulary in context which is higher than the pre-test score (21.0). Likewise, the students' ability to write coherently and in an appropriate style was better in the post-test (56.0) compared to the pre-test score (48.0). Coherence in the students' writing improved as a result of literature courses which fact supports the idea that reading literary texts can enhance writing creativity.

As shown in table (4:4), the test score reveals that there is good progress in the students' writing creativity in terms of text organization. In pre-test score the students' achievement was (26.0) while in the post-test it was higher nearing (50.0). This result shows that the students have achieved better paragraphing and the general organization of their writing improved after they were exposed to literature courses and engaged in reading selected literary texts.

As shown in table (4:4) above, the students' writing creativity is improved in the post-test compared to the pre-test. The development is in terms of originality of ideas, authenticity, vocabulary usage within context, this progress is the

result of literature courses that have been taught before the post-test.

Generally, the creative writing test revealed that positive teaching literature contributed to the development of the students' use of literary elements, literary techniques, language use and writing creativity. Therefore, hypotheses that were set to answer the main research questions have been confirmed.

## RESULTS

The major findings are:

1. Teaching and reading literary texts positively contribute to enhancing students' creative writing and imaginative thinking.
2. Literary texts help students use literary elements more effectively when writing stories.
3. Teaching and reading fiction develops students' power of imagination and scope of imaginative thinking.
4. Literature if it's taught properly develops the use of language in context. As a result students have used more flowery language, better idioms, good grammatical structures, effective punctuations and good spelling performance.
5. Literary texts help develop the use of literary techniques such as imagery, metaphors, narrative perspectives and symbols.
6. Teaching literature help enhance the general writing creativity in terms of originality, authenticity, vocabulary usage in context, coherence and organization of the text.

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