THE ANALYSIS OF CREATIVE WRITING TEACHING THROUGH STORY BOOK READING FOR THE FIRST GRADE STUDENTS OF TUNAS MUDA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

One method to support the success of teaching of writing skills is using story books. It has many kinds of benefits that provides the students more creative and challenging texts that require personal exploration, easier understanding of information which are commonly hard to comprehend and remember, and easier illustration in making connection among various elements and concepts being taught. This research deals with teaching creative writing through story book reading, and it is aimed at finding whether this method is beneficial or not in increasing creativity in writing. The study is carried out using a pre-test and post-test design to 14 students from the first grade. Between the two tests, the students were provided with basic knowledge of creative writing. The data of the research were the scores of the pre-test and post-test compared and analyzed based on the rubric of ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The pre-test result shows that 29% of the students achieve the standard of achievement. After the creative writing process, the post-test result indicates that 93% of the students achieve the standard of student achievement in creative writing.

Keywords: creative writing, teaching, story book reading, pre-test, post-test

ABSTRAK

Salah satun metode untuk mendukung keberhasilan pengajaran menulis adalah menggunakan buku cerita. Metode ini memiliki berbagai manfaat, di mana menyediakan siswa teks yang lebih kreatif dan menantang yang membutuhkan eksplorasi pribadi, lebih mudah memahami informasi yang sering sulit untuk memahami dan mengingat, dan menyediakan ilustrasi yang lebih mudah dalam membuat koneksi di antara berbagai unsur dan konsep-konsep yang diajarkan. Penelitian ini berkaitan dengan pengajaran menulis kreatif melalui membaca buku cerita yang ditujukan untuk menemukan apakah metode ini bermanfaat atau tidak dalam meningkatkan kreativitas dalam menulis. Penelitian ini dilakukan menggunakan desain pre-test dan post-test untuk 14 siswa kelas satu. Di antara kedua tes, para siswa diberi pengetahuan dasar tentang menulis kreatif. Adapun data penelitian ini adalah nilai pra tes dan pasca tes yang dibandingkan dan dianalisis berdasarkan rubrik ide, organisasi, pilihan kata, kalimat kelancaran, dan konvensi. Hasil pra tes menunjukkan bahwa 29% siswa mencapai standar prestasi. Setelah melewati proses menulis kreatif, hasil pasca tes menunjukkan bahwa 93% siswa mencapai standar prestasi siswa dalam menulis kreatif.

Kata kunci: menulis kreatif, pengajaran, membaca buku cerita, pra tes, pasca tes

INTRODUCTION

Students need to have a good writing skill. They need to learn to write different kinds of writing starting from the beginner level. They will bring this ability to their adulthood where they face the global world that demands them to be able to listen, speak, read, and write in English.

However, many students have never fully achieved the ability of expressing ideas or thought in writing, even in their native language. This is because the students are seldom exposed to the writing practice. They lack in practice to use their imagination and creativity in writing. So when it comes to the writing story activity, they have difficulties in expressing their ideas and feelings into written language.

The essence of writing is choice and writing is considered the means to communicate in a way that is "profound, or funny, or provocative, or highly persuasive" (Veit, Gould & Clifford, 2001). From another view of writing, Murray (2004, p. 29) and Perl (1995, p. 43) define writing as "a creative discovery procedure characterized by the dynamic interplay of content and language: the use of language to explore beyond the known content."

However, writing, in language teachers' opinions, is "a language skill which is difficult to acquire" (Tribble, 1996, p. 3). It is "a process that occurs over a period of time, particularly if we take into account the sometimes extended periods of thinking that precede creating an initial draft" (Harris, 1969, p. 10). Tribble also stresses that writing "normally requires some form of instruction" and that "it is not a skill that is readily picked up by exposure" (1996, p. 11).

Creative Writing

In creative writing, the writer uses words and imagination, usually in the form of stories and poems. Campbell (1998) states that bringing the entertainment of texts (reading and writing) to our students as a means of facilitating their language acquisition is what teaching creative writing is about. At any proficiency level, there may be places in the curriculum where reading literature and writing creatively may provide breadth and interest to the lesson.

Nevertheless, finding appropriate material for the writing class is sometimes difficult for the teachers since writing has no subject matter of its own. One benefit of having story books as the reading content of a composition lesson is that the readings become the subject matter for the compositions. In composition lesson whose reading content is story books, students make inference, formulate their own ideas, and look closely at a text for evidence to support generalizations. Thus, they learn how to think creatively, freely and critically. (Spack, 1985:719).

In this case, Chen (2006) did a project in which she used children's literature to promote EFL university students' narrative thinking and enhance their writing ability through a task of story reading and writing. She has found that: (1) children's literature when selected carefully, can be a valuable resource for integrative EFL learning since stories tend to invoke imagination and desire for creating, composition classes can be conducted more than the drab routines of "students-write" and "teacher-correct"; (2) sharing and publication with the assistance of computer technology can empower student writers and develop a writing community in the class; (3) time, support and practice can provide scaffolds for unskilled or low self-esteemed students; (4) varrative genre knowledge gained through explicit instruction can promote EFL students' narrative thinking and facilitate the task of reading and writing stories.

In the mean time, Hişmanoğlu (2005) has found that literature plays an important role in the English programs of many non-speaking countries. However there are very few pedagogically-designed appropriate materials that can be used by language teachers in a language classroom. He also stated that the teacher has an important role in teaching English through literature. First, he should determine the aim of language teaching in relation to the needs and expectations of the students. Second he should select the appropriate language teaching method, teaching techniques, and classroom activities. Then, the teacher should select the literary texts relevant to the aim and the objectives of his teaching.

Additionally, Coonrod and Hughes (1994) conducted the research in a kindergarten where 22 students from five different cultures began a journey of formal learning. They integrated the subjects taught through the story books that they had chosen carefully. They conducted the lesson for a week which focusing on different skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy theory. In summary, through the use of concrete referents and comprehensible information linked by literacy selections, language minority students can develop concept and content knowledge, even at the beginning level. Through teacher questioning which combines higher order of thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and predicting with basic interpersonal communication skills, language development is facilitated. The use of literature content tends to increase the motivation of students as they have found with the non-English speaking children with whom they have worked in early childhood and kindergarten classes.

Based on these grounds, the idea of conducting this study is actually to encourage the students to read more and then explore and use their imagination in the writing activity and also to have the knowledge of the process of making a masterpiece of creative writing.

There are four problems that act as the main guidance in doing this research and observation: (1) is reading story books beneficial in increasing creativity in creative writing?; (2) how are the story books used to teach creative writing?; (3) what genres of story books could be used?; (4) what are the difficulties in teaching creative writing using the story books?

The subject of the research was the first grade students of Tunas Muda International School in academic year 2009 – 2010. There were twenty seven students in grade one, and they were separated into two classes, 1D and 1N. The class chosen as the subjects of this research was the 1N class, which consisted of seven girls and seven boys.

This research represented action research, where the story book reading was applied based on the teaching instructions in the classroom. The aim of the action research approach was to find out the changing of a situation after the application of a procedure taken. Therefore, there was a pre-test before the action was taken, and a post-test after the action was done. After the pre-test was done, in a couple of sessions, several story books were introduced and at the end, the students produced their own piece of writing. Afterwards, the progress of the students' writing ability was analyzed by comparing the writing results on the given task before and after the writing process. Before the analysis was done, a hypothesis was built based on the problem identification and the theoretical background, and this hypothesis was made through the use of story books. The hypothesis was that the use of story books can help the first grade students to increase their writing skill.

DISCUSSION

The teaching of creative writing through story book reading was done in two parts. Cycle one was the introduction or the brainstorming session and cycle two was the presentation of the process of writing. Each cycle consisted of several activities, and once they were completed, it was called a cycle. Before the story book was introduced, a pre-test was given to find the students' ability in writing a

short story. After the creative writing sessions were held, the students were given a post-test in which they were asked to compose their own story based on the unit they were studying, which was about a festival.

Cycle One

In this cycle, the students started to learn how to write a good story. They were familiarized with the model of writing which was learnt through different kinds of story books. This cycle focused on the writing process. It helped the students and the teachers know about the processes that they had to go through in order to produce a good piece of writing.

During this cycle the researcher did the pre-writing activities which helped formulate ideas before the writing began. The teacher chose a book titled '*Psid and Bolter*' and the students were briefly introduced with an explanation of some key vocabularies. After the reading, the teacher brought students' attention to some story writing strategies by asking these questions: (1) character: who are the people or animals in the story?; (2) setting: when and where does the story happen?; (3) problem: what trouble does the character face?; (4) plot: what happens when the character try to solve the problems?

The students were then asked to choose a character (either an animal or person of their choice). They also must think of the character namely an animal or a person, a boy or a girl, name, age, place it lives and time of day. For each day of the week, they must write what the character liked to do.

Students were then asked to draw pictures to answer the questions prompts namely: (1) beginning: what is your character? what is your character's name? where does it live? what time of day is it? what is your character's problem?; (2) middle: how does your character try to solve the problem?; (3) end: how is the problem solved? how does your character feel?

The last step was to use their pictures to write a story to include the story parts. The students used three different pencil colors to differentiate the beginning, middle and end.

Reading one story in a class is certainly not inspiring enough for creative writing. Since frequency ensures fluency in writing, the students were demanded to complete a book report in another session. Each of them chose one storybook from their own library at home, and then they had to complete the book report form which explained the characters, setting, problem and plot of the book.

Cycle Two

In cycle two, the students were asked to find out more about a festival that interested them, in relation of unit of inquiry entitled 'Festival'. Namely: *Australia Day, ANZAC Day* and *Mother's Day*. Each student was to be inspired by the festival they had chosen for the setting. They must follow the writing process to complete their story:

Step 1 – pre-writing: to make a story plan by answering the questions in the beginning, middle and end.
step 2 – writing: to use their story plan to write a first draft, with a beginning, middle and end.
step 3 – revising: the teacher will ask questions to the students to ensure more detail is needed.
step 4 – editing: to check their work for capital letters, end marks and spelling.
step 5 – publishing: to make a final copy, read their work to someone and reflect on their favorite part of the writing process.

Rubric and Scoring

Both the pre-test and post-test were scored using the rubric scoring guideline set by the Tunas Muda International School standard (Tabel 1). The rubric scoring guideline consists of five stages: ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions, with each stage worth 20 points.

Table 1
Rubric Scoring Guideline for First Grade Creative Writing

Stages of Development	Proficiencies	Score
Ideas	• Your story has a main character. • Your story has a problem. • A suitable title was given and written correctly.	20
Organization	• Beginning: Names the main character, the setting and the problem. • Middle: Tells how the main character tries to solve the problem. • End: Tells how the problem is solved.	20
Word Choice	• Usage of strong nouns, verbs, and modifiers. • Portray create clear, vivid pictures.	20
Sentence Fluency	• Skillfully written, show variety and are easy to read. • The sentences connects to one another.	20
Conventions	• The first line was indented, and the sentences flowed in paragraph form. • The use of correct spelling. • Each sentence started with a capital letter. • There was space between each word. • Each sentence ended with an end mark.	20
TOTAL		**100**

(Source: Tunas Muda International School)

The average score according to Tunas Muda International School standard is 75%. Anything below 75% is considered consolidating, which means the students need to work harder to improve the score.

Pre-Test Result

In the pre-test, the students were asked to compose a short story about their recent holiday. The test was done before the creative writing unit started, so that the level of students' abilities in writing can be determined. The topic of a holiday was chosen because it was easy to relate to and required imagination and creativity. The result of the pre-test can be shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Pre-Test Result

Name	Writing Assessment Rubric					Total Score 100	% Achievement	Students Achievement Standard	
	Ideas	Organization	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Convention			Achieved	Consolidating
	20	20	20	20	20				
Student 1	14	14	11	12	14	65	65		✓
Student 2	10	13	15	13	14	65	65		✓
Student 3	11	12	13	11	13	60	60		✓
Student 4	12	14	13	14	17	70	70		✓
Student 5	13	15	15	15	17	75	75	✓	
Student 6	10	15	14	12	14	65	65		✓
Student 7	11	14	13	12	15	65	65		✓
Student 8	14	14	15	16	16	75	75	✓	
Student 9	12	15	15	13	15	70	70		✓
Student 10	10	11	14	14	16	65	65		✓
Student 11	12	12	12	12	17	65	65		✓
Student 12	13	14	14	14	15	70	70		✓
Student 13	16	15	16	16	17	80	80	✓	
Student 14	17	17	16	16	19	85	85	✓	
Total Score	203	204	201	181	186	975	975	4	10
Maximum Score	280	280	280	280	280				
Score Achieved	72,50	72,86	71,79	64,64	66,43	69,64	69,64	29%	71%

The result of the pre-test showed that only four out of 14 students achieved the standard of scoring 75 and above. The rest of the class, ten out of 14 scored below 75.

The Creative Writing Process

The creative writing was part of the last unit of English, which was about 'Festival'. This particular unit started at the end of April 2010 until the end of May 2010. Each session consists of three parts; beginning, middle and end. Particularly in creative writing unit, at the beginning of every lesson, the teacher always read a story to stimulate and to lead on to the next activity. The middle or the main activity was planning or writing a story. At the end of the lesson, the teacher would sum it up by reviewing the previous activities. Below was the detail of every activity in the creative writing unit from start to finish.

On the first session, the teacher read a story book titled '*Psid and Bolter*' to the class. In every session she read two to three chapters at the beginning of every lesson. After reading the story, the students were introduced to story parts, and were asked to name them as per this story example. Then the students were asked to choose a character of their own choice, as part of the pre-writing process. It could be a person or animal. Then they had to write what the character liked to do (or their activities) everyday, for each day of the week.

On the second session, still on the pre-writing process, the students were asked to draw pictures to describe the beginning, middle and end of the story. They were also asked to write the keywords in describing the character and the situation. It appeared that the students enjoyed expressing themselves through drawings.

On the third session, the students wrote their own story based on the two previous pre-writing activities they had done. The story was written in paragraph form and the students used three different colors of pencil to differentiate the beginning, middle and end. Their story must consist of the four main points previously discussed: character, setting, problem, and plot. Most of the students in the class finished writing the story in one session, but some took two sessions to finish it.

Then the students were asked to fill out a book report on the weekend. They might choose the book they wanted from their own collection at home. After reading, they had to distinguish and fill out the character, setting, problem, and plot in each box.

On the fourth session, the students were introduced to several festivals: *Australia Day, ANZAC Day* and *Mother's Day*. The teacher gave explanations about each holiday and the students were to choose one they liked most out of the three holidays. Then they made a story plan by answering the questions with the key words in the beginning, middle and end. This pre-writing activity was similar to the previous one mentioned above.

On the fifth session, the students used their story plan to make a rough draft of their story in their handwriting book. After they finished, the teacher revised their work by asking them to add more details that were necessary to add to their stories. At the end of the lesson, the teacher edited the students' work for capital letters, end marks and spelling.

On the last session, the students made a final copy of their story in a decorative paper. On the other side of the paper, they drew their characters to make it more presentable.

The Post-Test Result

After creative writing sessions were held, the students were given a post-test. The instruction in this test was the same as that in the pre-test. The result can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Post-Test Result

Name	Writing Assessment Rubric					Total Score 100	% Achievement	Students Achievement Standard	
	Ideas	Organization	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Convention			Achieved	Consolidating
	20	20	20	20	20				
Student 1	13	13	15	12	17	70	70		✓
Student 2	18	12	15	15	18	78	78	✓	
Student 3	17	15	15	15	18	80	80	✓	
Student 4	18	15	15	15	18	81	81	✓	
Student 5	17	16	16	16	17	82	82	✓	
Student 6	18	16	16	15	17	82	82	✓	
Student 7	17	17	16	16	17	83	83	✓	
Student 8	18	16	16	16	17	83	83	✓	
Student 9	17	17	17	16	17	84	84	✓	
Student 10	18	17	16	16	18	85	85	✓	
Student 11	18	16	17	17	17	85	85	✓	
Student 12	18	17	17	17	18	87	87	✓	
Student 13	19	18	17	17	17	88	88	✓	
Student 14	20	17	18	18	17	90	90	✓	
Total Score	265	242	231	211	207	1158	1158	13	1
Maximum Score	280	280	280	280	280				
Score Achieved	94,64	86,43	82,50	75,36	73,93	82,71	82,71	93%	7%

From the post-test, it shows that after the teaching process, the average score increased from 69 to 82, which meant that the students had a better understanding in writing a short story and they were able to produce a good piece of writing. There were 13 students who were able to achieve a good progress in writing short stories and based on the standard of achievement; it was very high.

The Comparison between the Result of the Pre-Test and Post Test

Table 4 summarizes the result of the pre-test and that of the post-test. In this table, the results of the two tests are compared.

Table 4
The Comparison between the Result of the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Name	Test Results					
	Pre-Test	Achievement		Post-Test	Achievement	
		Achieved	Consolidating		Achieved	Consolidating
Student 1	65		✓	70		✓
Student 2	65		✓	78	✓	
Student 3	60		✓	80	✓	
Student 4	70		✓	81	✓	
Student 5	75	✓		82	✓	
Student 6	65		✓	82	✓	
Student 7	65		✓	83	✓	
Student 8	75	✓		83	✓	
Student 9	70		✓	84	✓	
Student 10	65		✓	85	✓	
Student 11	65		✓	85	✓	
Student 12	70		✓	87	✓	
Student 13	80	✓		88	✓	
Student 14	85	✓		90	✓	
Total Score	**975**	4	10	**1158**	13	1
Average	**69,64**			**82,71**		

The pre-test showed that out of 14 students, the average score was 69. Based on this result, there were more students who did not know how to write a good creative writing and only four out of 14 students who could make a good short story, which meant that the students' achievement in creative writing was low before the creative writing using story book was taught. On the other hand, the post-test result showed that the average score increased from 69 to 82. It indicates that the students had a better understanding in writing a short story and they were able to produce a good piece of writing. It is clearly seen from Table 4 that the increase of the scores was significant, and the students had improved their achievement and skills in writing a short story.

Additionally, at the end of the creative writing unit, the students said that the guidance in the writing process were very useful and made it easier for them to write a good short story. The books that had been read in the classroom gave them ideas about the story organization.

CONCLUSION

In terms of classroom practice and instruction design, this research has the following implications. First, children story books when they are selected carefully can be a valuable resource for teaching and learning creative writing since stories can develop children's imagination and desire for creating and composing stories. The students are inspired to use different ways to analyze, review and play with a story. They also share their writing and what they have read. There are no specific criteria in choosing a story book. One of the things that are put into consideration before choosing a book is the level of difficulty of English; whether the students could easily understand the context of the book, and whether the words are too difficult to understand. The other important thing to consider is the character, setting, plot and problem. These components are the key in understanding and

creating a good story. Therefore, students must be able to identify them and later create a good story that consists of these four components. Second, sharing and publishing their stories can build the students' self-confidence and self-esteem as writers. Last but not least, the process of creating a story is a very important skill that the students should have as the foundation for their further education. Furthermore, from the analysis on the previous section, by comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test, it is shown that reading story books are evidently beneficial in increasing their creativity. In fact, the majority of the students have shown improvements on the five stages of rubric.

Based on the observation, the teaching process and the analysis, it can be concluded that the love of reading can motivate students to write a short story more creatively. Story book is a good alternative to teach English especially in writing. It is also clear that the use of story books for teaching creative writing improves the students' ability in writing skills. Writing is not difficult to teach if the teacher can find a good and fun way to deliver it. Teaching creative writing through story books is a good start for students who do not like to write. The students also find it easy when they know the strategy or the process they should follow to produce a piece of writing. Even though some students found difficulty on the pre-writing stages, with appropriate help and exercise they were able to enjoy the writing process thoroughly.

There are two methods in introducing a story book. First is that the teacher reads it, and it can be applied if the level of English is a little bit difficult; and second is that the students read by themselves. Both methods are applicable, but the level of difficulty must be put into consideration before choosing a story book. The story books that are used in the creative writing unit are mostly fiction. The reason is simply because fiction could trigger the imagination to be more creative. However, the teacher can also use non-fiction books to provide varieties of literature genres to the students. Based on what has been taught on the creative writing unit, a good story is expected to have four main elements: character, setting, plot and problem. It also has to have a clear structure of beginning, middle and end. All of the writings that the students produced after being taught creative writing, have all of these elements. In teaching creative writing to the first grade, the only difficulty was that some of the students have difficulty in expressing their ideas. Although most of them have varieties of ideas and imagination, they need a lot of guidance in understanding the concept to write a good piece of writing.

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