

The Level of Creativity in English Writing among Jordanian Secondary School Students

Luqman M.Rababah¹, Abdul Halim Bin Mohamed², Malek T. Jdaitawi³
and Nour Z. Bani Melhem⁴

¹School of Education and Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia
rababah80@gmail.com

²School of Education and Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia
halim@uum.edu.my

³Dept of Counseling and Psychology, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia
mzuoot@yahoo.com

⁴School of Education and Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia
prettyshatha@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the level of creativity in English writing among Jordanian secondary school students. The researchers have used a random sample of 100 students of secondary school students in Irbid and Amman cities in Jordan. Adapetd Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) was used to measure their creativity in English writing. TTCT test is thought to be the best test to evaluate the creativity dimensions of students in writing. TTCT assesses fluency or the number of ideas; flexibility, the variety of categories in the answers; and originality, which consists in considering innovative answers, neither familiar nor inappropriate. The results of the study showed that the respondents fall in the moderate level of creativity.

Keywords: Creativity Dimensions, Creativity in EFL writing, Level of creativity, Jordanian Secondary School Students, TTCT.

INTRODUCTION

The first studies regarding creativity in education took place in the United States in the 1950s. After that creativity has been steadily increasing in education because educators and researchers have realized that creativity plays an important role in forming students' life. Nowadays, the improvements of students' creativity have become the most goals of all societies (Baucus & Human, 2008). Such improvements could make important differences in the way students think and in the way they solve the problems as well. English language educators have also paid attentions to enhance students' creativity due to the strong relationship between English language and creativity. Among all elements of language teaching, writing and creativity have a very close and mutual relationship. The reason is simple as writing itself is already a manifestation of creativity (Lin,1998). According to Tse& Shum (2000), creativity is an important aspect of writing. They further add that creativity is one of six levels of language skills. Therefore, improving students' creativity in writing is one of the most skills that EFL students need to develop throughout their schooling (Ibnian, 2010).

However, educators and researchers have defined creativity in more than two hundred definitions, which were classified into three main categories; creativity as a person (Cropley, 1967) creativity as a process (Wallas, 1926), creativity as a product (MacKinnon, 1978). Apart from the categories, Torrance (1995) stated that fluency, flexibility and originality, are the main dimensions of creativity. Based on the aforementioned creativity dimensions, Torrance and Guilford developed a test of creativity. Torrance Test of Creative thinking (TTCT) is a test which measures the creativity of the individuals in writing (Torrance,1995, Ming, 2005).TTCT measures the fluency, the flexibility and the originality of a creative product and they are as follow:

- Fluency refers to the number of different ideas one can produce, which implies (a) word fluency; (b) associational fluency; (c) expressional fluency; (d) ideational fluency.
- Flexibility refers to the variety of ideas one produces, which implies: (a) spontaneous flexibility; (b) adaptive flexibility.
- Originality refers to how unusual are the ideas one produces including remote associations.

Consequently, unleashing students' creativity in writing has become one of Jordanian Ministry of Education (JMoE) priorities. JMoE has been launching educational reforms and initiatives aiming at unlocking students' creativity in English language including writing skill since 2003 (JEI, 2010). Further, English language and creativity development of students are always valued at education system in Jordan (National Agenda of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2006). Moreover, JMoE has recommended creating a curriculum based on developing English language skills of students including writing skill, creativity and problem solving through ICT-rich environments (ibid).Thus, secondary school students in Jordan are expected to write three well organized paragraphs (Ibnian, 2010). However, despite all effort done by Jordanian government in launching

such initiatives, secondary school students' showed low level in their creative writing (Ibnian, 2010). Therefore, in order to provide theoretical grounds for creativity development in EFL writing, the purpose of the present study is to measure students' creativity in EFL writing utilizing Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT). Furthermore, the present study aims to identify the level of creativity in EFL writing in all creativity dimensions among Jordanian secondary school students with attempting to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of creativity in writing among Jordanian secondary school students?
2. What is the level of the students in fluency dimension?
3. What is the level of the students in flexibility dimension?
4. What is the level of the students in originality dimension?

Answering these questions could help Jordanian Ministry of Education (JMoE) evaluate the effects of educational programs, materials, curricula, and teaching procedures, and provide clues for remedial and psychotherapeutic programs. The findings of the current study could help teachers, educators and policy makers place more emphasis on creativity dimensions in EFL writing; fluency, flexibility and originality in the future. However, this study is limited to creativity in one skill, which is English writing skill. Further, the study is limited to public schools in Irbid and Amman cities in the academic year 2011- 2012.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned above, creativity plays an important role in students' life. Creativity is considered an essential element necessary for learning in the scope of education, because learning itself is a creative process that involves students making information relevant. According to Starko (1995), students' creativity could be enhanced by linking prior knowledge and new knowledge in an individually meaningful format. This general principle applies also to language education, as illustrated above. Lin (1998) pointed out that among the elements of language teaching, writing and creativity have a very close and mutual relationship. Writing is the best way to promote creativity of students. On the other hand, stimulating creativity and idea generation is the most effective way of teaching writing.

However, Guilford (1950) was the first theorist who talked about creativity in education. Guilford proposed a divergent thinking model because he recognized that thinking is far more complex than the fairly limited set of skills tapped by intelligence tests. Guilford's model included 120 different thinking skills in a complex three-dimensional taxonomy of cognitive skills. Guilford's goal was to create a map that would contain, and to some degree explain, all possible varieties of human thought. After Guilford, Getzels and Jackson (1962); Taylor (1959); and Torrance (1962) focused their work on evaluating and developing creativity in students. But it was Torrance who dedicated his life towards enhancing the recognition, acceptance, and development of the creative personality in both education and the workplace. Consequently, Guilford (1967) and Torrance (1965) have developed Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) to assess students' creativity in writing, which can be used from preschool up to graduate students (Ming, 2005). It is easy and amusing for students. It is a useful screening instrument in order to identify high as well as low creative potential (Bermejo et al., 2005). TTCT is the only one of its kind, which is the most widely used test of creativity in the world (Torrance, 1966; Torrance, 2001). The TTCT consists of two subtests (Verbal and Figural), each of which has two forms (A and B). TTCT Verbal A, which has been adapted and modified for the present study, measures three creativity dimensions: fluency, flexibility and originality.

PREVIOUS STUDIES ON CREATIVITY IN WRITING

Ibnian (2010) conducted a study which aimed at investigating the effect of using the story- mapping technique on developing tenth grade students' short story writing skills in EFL. The results revealed that the story mapping technique had a positive effect on developing Jordanian tenth grade students' short story writing skills in terms of content and organization, mechanics of writing, language use as well as in skills emerged from creative abilities (fluency, flexibility, novelty and elaboration). Another study carried out, in Jordan, by Ayasrah and Hamadneh (2010). The purpose of the study was to investigate degree of creative thinking among secondary school students in Irbid, Jordan in light of type of school, gender, and educational track using TTCT. The results indicated significant differences in study subjects' means scores on the creative thinking measure due to educational track, in favor of scientific track students, due to type of school, in favor of private schools, while no differences were found due to gender. No interaction was found between gender, educational track, and type of school on each skill of creative thinking. In light of the findings, the study suggests conducting future research focusing on creative thinking in the different school levels and with using other variables. Siswono (2009) carried out a study, which aimed to describe the characteristic of the level of student's creativity. The result of this research pointed out the five levels of creativity that are of level 0 to level 4 which has a different characteristic. This difference is based on fluency, flexibility, and novelty in problem solving and problem posing.

Jiazeng et al (1997) have examined the creativity dimensions among South East University students, China. The study used Torrance Test for Creative Thinking (TTCT). The results of creativity test of 72 students were collected and analyzed. The results revealed that most students fall in the moderate level. A study by Long and Hiebert (1985) compared an imagery-training group and a writing practice group on two indicators of creativity: originality and fluency. Results indicated that the imagery group significantly outscored the writing practice group on both originality and fluency measures. A follow-up study (Jampole et al., 1991) replicated and extended the above findings using mental imagery to enhance gifted elementary pupils' creative writing. These results indicated that instruction and practice in using imagery can enhance aspects of gifted pupils' creative writing. Another study by Jampole et al. (1994) conducted an in-depth examination of imagery use in creative writing. The results show that guided imagery appears to be a viable strategy to enhance originality in creative writing.

In another study, Tse and Wong (1995) studied 18 primary pupils using mind map, sensory writing, and imagery as the methods for creative teaching. After four sessions, the pupils were found to have significant improvement in their writing. A qualitative study on the composing process was conducted among 159 Primary 6 pupils to investigate the starting of the composition and found that pupils' work adopted more approaches and demonstrated more fluent ideas in the starting of creative writing than those of situational composition (Sit, 1998). Moneta and Siu (2002) carried out a study which aimed at examining how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influenced creativity and academic performance in students' aged 18-24 attending college/university in Hong Kong. The findings indicated that originality had a significantly positive correlation with trait intrinsic motivation. The result also suggested that our college environment discouraged intrinsic motivation and creativity and urged the objective of promoting a positive development of the college environment. Although many studies have been conducted students' creativity, most of them were on students' motivation (Moneta and Siu, 2002), students' creativity level (Siswono, 2009; Ayasrah and Hamadne, 2010). Only few studies focused on students' creativity in EFL writing (Ibnian, 2010; Ming, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

The study has used quantitative approach to draw conclusions on the creativity level among secondary schools students in EFL writing in Jordan. The participants of the study were mainly secondary school students drawn from Irbid and Amman cities in Jordan. A random sample of students, representing of the secondary schools students in both cities, was selected for the quantitative study. However, the participants have studied English language skills for about eleven years. They speak Arabic language as their mother tongue.

INSTRUMENT

In order to assess students' creativity in EFL writing, Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) was adapted, modified and translated into Arabic language for the present study. TTCT was developed by Guilford (1967) and Torrance (1965) to assess students' creativity in writing (Ming, 2005). TTCT can be used from preschool up to graduate students (Ming, 2005). It is also easy and amusing for students. Additionally, TTCT is a useful screening instrument in order to identify high as well as low creative potential (Bermejo et al., 2005). Furthermore, TTCT is not only the most widely used test to measure creativity, but its use is supported by more evidence of validity than any other creativity test (Khatena, 1989). Moreover, TTCT has been translated into 35 languages (Millar, 2001). However, the participants were asked to write their response to the TTCT which enables the researcher to measure the following creativity dimensions; fluency, flexibility, and originality.

VALIDITY

The content validity of the TTCT items and the scoring criteria was endorsed by a small expert panel; three experienced secondary school teachers who are proficient and specialist in EFL field and one PhD student in EFL field. All of them agreed that the components are relevant and the scoring criteria are fair and objective. Minor revisions were made as to some of the expressions in the scale. Moreover, TTCT was translated into Arabic language by three experienced translators who hold PhD certificates in EFL.

RELIABILITY OF THE TEST

The outcome of Cronbach Alpha towards this entire research instrument (TTCT) was proven highly reliable which is: creativity test (.886).

RESULTS

The present study has been conducted to identify the level of creativity dimensions (fluency, flexibility, and originality) in EFL writing among secondary schools students in Jordan; the results indicated that many students lack fluency and flexibility while their originality level was high (see table 4). The findings for the creativity

level of the students showed that , 65% of respondents are in the moderate level in total, 19 % fall into the low level and only 16% fall into the high level of creativity. Table 1.1 below, shows the findings for creativity level of the students in EFL writing, which were analyzed utilizing SPSS version 15.

Table 1: *Results for Creativity Level in EFL Writing*

Scale	Score	F	%
High level of creativity	above 57	16	16%
Moderator level of creativity	29-56	65	65%
Low level of creativity	below 27	19	19%

The results also indicated that many students lack fluency. The findings revealed that 85% of respondents are in the moderate level, 5% fall into the low level and only 10% fall into the high level of creativity. Table2 below, shows the findings for students in fluency level.

Table 2: *Results of the Students in Fluency*

Level	Frequency	Percentage %
High	10	10%
Moderate	85	85%
Low	5	5%

On flexibility, the results indicated that many students lack this dimension. The findings revealed that 76% of respondents are in the moderate level, 24% fall into the low level and 0% fall into the high level of creativity. Table 3 below, shows the findings for students' level in flexibility dimension.

Table 3: *Results of the Students in Flexibility*

Level	Frequency	Percentage %
High	0	0%
Moderate	76	76%
Low	24	24%

Regarding originality, the findings revealed that 47% respondents are in high level in originality, 16% of respondents are in the moderate level and 37% fall into the low level. Table 4 below, shows the findings for students' in originality dimension.

Table 4: *Results of the Students in Originality*

Level	Frequency	Percentage %
High	47	47%
Moderate	16	16%
Low	37	37%

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

As a conclusion, this study reported the result of the descriptive profile of the respondents, presented the level of creativity in EFL writing among secondary school students in Jordan. The sample of the study consisted of 100 secondary school students from Irbid and Amman cities. The main goal of this study is to determine the level of students' creativity in EFL writing in total and the level in each of creativity dimensions using TTCT. The results of the study indicated that many students lack fluency, flexibility and originality, 65% of respondents are in the moderate level in total, 19 % fall into the low level and only 16% fall into the high level of creativity in writing. However, based on findings of the study, the researcher recommends JMoE placing more emphasis on creativity in EFL writing utilizing new technologies such as ICT, implementing the proper strategies that enhance creativity in EFL instruction and training school teachers on how to teach creativity regarding EFL writing. Moreover, this study recommends EFL teachers placing more emphasis on students' creativity in EFL writing by optimizing the ICT tools that are available in the schools. Furthermore, this study recommends researchers conducting more in-depth studies on creativity in English language in general and in English writing in particular, finding out new strategies and new tools that help EFL teachers enhance students creativity in EFL writing such as ICT tools, and conducting studies to explore the barriers that inhibit students from improving their creativity in EFL writing.

REFERENCES

Ayasrah and Hamadneh, (2010). Degree of creative thinking among secondary students in Irbid, Jordan. *An-Najah University Journal for Research*, 24 (9), 2590-2620. (Available in Arabic)

- language only)
- Baucus, M. S., Norton, W. I., Baucus, D. A., & Human, S. E. (2008). Fostering creativity and innovation without encouraging unethical behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 81(1), 97-115.
- Bermejo, M. R., Ferrándiz, C. and Prieto, M. D. (2005). An empirical approximation to the creative consistency during the creative process. *The First International Conference : Creativity: A Multifaceted View*. Moscow.
- Cropley, A. J. (1967). *Creativity*. London: Longman.
- Getzels, J. W. & Jackson, P. J. (1962). *Creativity and Intelligence: Explorations with gifted students*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist*, 5, 444-454.
- Ibnian, S. (2010). The effect of using the story- mapping technique on developing tenth grade students' short story writing skills in EFL. *English Language Teaching*, 3(4), 181-194.
- Jampole, E., Konopak, B., Readence, E., & Mosher, B. (1991). Using mental imagery to enhance gifted elementary students' creative writing. *Reading Psychology*, 12, 183-197.
- Jampole, E., Mathews, F., & Konopak, B. (1994). Academically gifted students' use of imagery for creative writing. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 28, 1-15.
- Jordan Education Initiative (JEI). (2010). *Annual Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.jei.org.jo/cms/sites/default/files/reports/JEI%20Book.pdf>
- Jiazeng, L., Yanbao, L., Yi, C., & Wenxian, W. (1997). Evaluating of creative thinking of students and creativity development at South East University, China. *Frontiers in Education Conference*. China.
- Khatena, J. (1989). Intelligence and creativity to multitalent. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 23(2), 93-97.
- Lin, J. P. (1998). *A creative writing classroom*. Taiwan: Psychological Press.
- Long, S. & Hiebert, E. H. (1985). In R. Lalik (Ed.) Effects of awareness and practice in mental imagery on creative writing of gifted children. *National Reading Conference: Issues in Literacy: A research perspective* (pp.381-395). New York.
- MacKinnon, D. W. (1978). *In Search of Human Effectiveness: Identifying and Developing Creativity*. New York: Creative Education Foundation.
- Millar, A. (2001). Compensation, culture and creativity (unpublished paper). *ASIIP Annual Conference Oxford*.
- Ming, C. (2005). *Describing and enhancing creativity in Chinese writing*. (Doctoral dissertation). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.
- Ministry of Education. (2006). *The general guidelines and general and specific outcomes for the English language basic and secondary stages*. Amman: Directorate of Curricula and School-Textbooks.
- Moneta, G. B. & Siu, C. M. Y. (2002). Trait intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, academic performance, and creativity in Hong Kong college students. *Journal of College Student Development, Sep/ Oct 2002*, 43 (5), 664-683.
- National Agenda of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. (2006). *The tenth chapter*. Amman: Jordan.
- Siswono, T. (2009). Level of student's creative thinking in classroom mathematics. *Educational Research and Review*, 6 (7), 548-553
- Sit, F. M. J. (1998). *A study of the composing process of primary six pupils: Starting* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.
- Starko, A. J. (1995). *Creativity in the classroom: Schools of curious delight*. New York: Longman Publishers USA.
- Taylor, I. A. (1959). The Nature of the Creative Process. In Smith, P. (Ed.). *Creativity: An Examination of the Creative Process*. New York: Hastings House.
- Torrance, E. P. (1962). *Guiding creative talent*. NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Torrance, E. P. (1965). In N. J. Aschner & C. E. Bish (Eds) The measurement of creative behavior in children. *Productive Thinking in Education* (pp.199-216). Washington: National Education Association.
- Torrance, E. P. (1995). *Creative motivation scale*. Athens: Georgia Studies of Creative Behavior.
- Torrance, E. P. (1966). *The Torrance tests of creative thinking-norms-technical manual research edition-verbal tests, forms A and B-figural tests, forms A and B*. Princeton, NJ: Personnel Press.
- Tse, S. K. & Shum W. C. (2000). *Teaching Chinese language writing in secondary school: Theory and design*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Education Department.
- Tse, S. K. & Wong, W. P. (1995). Learning effectively and happily: creative writing. In S.K. Tse (Ed), *Reading and Writing* (pp.192-222). Hong Kong: Green Bud Education Centre.
- Wallas, G. (1926). *The art of thought*. New York: Harcourt.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

