

Blending Creative Approaches to English Language Learning: Shaping Critical Thinkers

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Abstract—The primary objective of this study is to assess whether or not there has been an increase in the students' capacity for creative and critical thinking as a direct result of the focus that has been placed on critical thinking and communication. The following hypotheses will guide our research: (H1) that original thinking is not included in the prescribed syllabus at the graduate level; and (H2) that Paul's E&S of critical thinking can promote creative writing skills among graduate Arab learners in the Department of English & Translation at Ar Rass, Qassim University. Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used by the researchers in this study with a cross-sectional design. Quantitative analysis was performed on a total of two hundred forty (240) research papers. Twelve instructors from the English and Translation Department at Qassim University's Ar Rass campus contributed the descriptive information that was used. A Paired Samples t-test was carried out for the purpose of investigating the hypotheses. The null hypothesis was validated using the p 0.05 threshold of significance. This entails that the curriculum for the Bachelor of Arts degree must include some forms of innovative problem solving. The second hypothesis was validated using the p0.05 and p0.01 thresholds of significance, respectively. That is to say, Paul's E&S line of thinking can be included into Research Writing in order to nurture and support students' creative thinking.

Index Terms—Communicative Teaching Approach, creative thinking, English curriculum, original thought, inventive teaching strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

This study examines graduating Arab students of English and Translation at Qassim University to see whether or not they are able to think creatively or in a novel manner. Researchers employ Bloom's Taxonomy (2019) as the organizing principle for their research into creative thinking in order to better equip Arab students with the ability to produce original ideas.

This study investigates the question of whether or not the English curriculum at the graduate level at Qassim University poses any obstacles to original thought, and it then makes recommendations for how to more effectively incorporate original thought into English language instruction in order to foster creative writing abilities among Arab graduate students. During the course of the winter, spring, and summer of the academic year 2020-21, a total of (140) students who were in their fourth year at Ar Rass English and Translation Department at Qassim University, made responses. The primary objective was to investigate whether or not Arab students who are studying at the graduate level exhibit signs of original thought in their writing and whether or not the curriculum that is intended for these students genuinely supports unique thought. The participants in this study (n=280) were given the task of writing an essay, and the goal of the research was to establish what percentage of participants were capable of coming up with original ideas and concepts. In order to assess the hypotheses, we made use of both descriptive statistics and a t-test on paired samples. Taking into consideration the findings, the research offered some suggestions for developing inventive teaching strategies in ELT (English Language Teaching) programs at the graduate level. It was hypothesized that the English language professors working in the Department of English and Translation at Ar Rass, Qassim University could play a significant role in the development of self-reflective linguistic habits of mind in the students who were expected to obtain BA degree in English language and translation. Students are likely to increase both their language abilities and their overall level of competency if they are able to mix their writing with innovative thoughts.

Research Questions

The research mainly targeting to obtain answers to the following questions to help Arab graduate students enhance their creative writing abilities:

- a) Does the prescribed course of study present a sufficient challenge to the breadth of original thought at the graduate level?
- b) How might innovative thought be incorporated into ELT classrooms?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been proposed by the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of these study topics:

(H1) Graduate level curriculum does not contain any opportunity for creative problem solving. (H2) Paul's E&S of critical thinking can be beneficial to creative writing among graduate Arab students at Qassim University.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The great Greek philosopher Socrates is credited with popularizing the method of original thought known as Socratic questioning, which was used by many of his students and disciples to guide ancient logic and is still utilized by modern linguists today. If we look back far enough in history, we can see that Socrates popularized this method of original thought.

Dewey (1933, p. 6) was the first scholar to bring the concept of original thought into the classroom with his definition of critical thinking as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds on which it is based; and the further conclusion to which it tends". Paul et al. (1993, p. 56) also discovered methods that were comparable to "judge the credibility of sources of information," "analyze or evaluate arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or ideas," and "create or assess solutions".

Based on the three fundamental domains proposed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 and some of his followers, the ELTs (English Language Teachers) can split education into three broad groups:

1. Information that contains the individual's mental capabilities.
2. Character, which is developed via inner growth and maturation.
3. The capacity to move one's own body or to motivate oneself; the psychomotor talents fall under this group.

As they pursue their educational goals, students should keep these three areas in the forefront of their minds (Bloom, 1956). The purpose of this study is to provide a solution to the question, "Does the prescribed curriculum promote the goals of the learning process?" and, if the answer is no, to provide some suggestions for how Saudi students of English can be encouraged to engage then in creative problem-solving. In order to determine whether or not students at the Department of English and Translation in College of Science and Arts at Ar Rass (Qassim University) have developed proficiency in one or more of these three areas by the time they graduate. The purpose of this research is to determine whether or not they have.

The findings of this study provide credence to the concept that students' capacity to think creatively when writing essays not only enriches their experience of learning a language but also affords them an opportunity to learn more about themselves. According to Day (2003, p. 26), characteristics that are beneficial to creative thought include "the use of intuition, creating unusual connections, originality, flexibility, objectivity, reason, and willingness to take chances". Openness, curiosity, and fearlessness are just a few examples of the kinds of personality attributes that foster the development of creative or original thought. These characteristic features are assigned by psychologists and educators to a mode of thought known as "divergent thinking," in which an individual's thoughts and reasoning are allowed to "roam" freely and evaluate a number of different ways to a certain situation. The ability to think in unexpected ways may be taught, just like any other skill you might learn. As opposed to merely guiding students through the many lessons in the curriculum, Lipman (2003) asserted that the fundamental responsibility of teachers should be to cultivate students' capacity for critical thinking. According to Brown (2004), the goals of an ideal academic English program should go beyond language issues and nurture the skill of original thought rather than simply focusing on the language itself. Teachers of a language have a responsibility to advance their students higher along Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) of Learner Tasks to properly teach the language.

According to Bloom's taxonomy of learning, which was developed in 1956, it is possible for the knowledge gained during the process of learning to encompass not only the development of mental or cognitive abilities but also the recognition or recall of facts that have been stated in the past. This is one of the possibilities. According to Bloom's taxonomy, the six categories that make up this domain are listed below, starting with the least difficult and working their way up to the most challenging ones.

- a) Be able to recall specifics such as statistics or facts
- b) Being able to understand what is being said and being able to translate, extrapolate, interpret, and apply what is being stated to find solutions to problems, describing a situation into a particular setting using one's own terminology.
- c) Application: making use of a concept in a novel setting or unintentionally using an abstraction in a setting where it was not intended to be used. The student is required to apply classroom information in unexpected professional settings.
- d) Deconstructs the information or the ideas such that their structure can be understood by breaking them down into their component parts. Examines the information or data to determine its patterns so that the user can observe them and be able to recognize the difference between facts and assumptions and then acts consequently.
- e) Synthesis is the process of putting together a whole from its component elements. Construct a final product out of its constituent parts while keeping an eye out for any innovative linkages or frameworks that might emerge.
- f) Evaluate the merits of anything, such as an idea or a piece of information.

In order for students to become innovative and critical language users of the English language, it is proposed that teachers of the English language may employ a variety of different teaching strategies, some of which may involve exercises that can encourage practicing some forms of the original thought. This enables students to learn the language and this can be accomplished with the support of skills in interaction, analysis, and criticism.

In spite of the broad recognition that critical thinking skills are important, their use is restricted for a number of reasons, one of which is the absence of defined levels of thinking in ELT. In order to counteract this difficulty, English language instructors frequently resort to exercises that push students to interact with one another, think imaginatively, and communicate with one another. As a result, children would develop the key skills necessary for learning a language. When Paul et al. (1993) stated that "every student who learns the logic of a discipline must build that logic in his or her own mind," he is referring to this idea. There is no way to generate the logic for the learner or to simply "give," "transfer," or "inject" the logic in prepackaged form; rather, each step of the production process requires the presence of critical thought and judgment. There is no way to generate the logic for the learner or to simply "give," "transfer," or "inject" the logic in prepackaged form.

The process of learning is not instantaneous; rather, students should make an effort to make use of their own thoughts to critically scrutinize and analyze the information that is presented to them, which will ultimately lead to the construction of their own personal understanding of the language Wallace (2005, p. 67). Students in the Department of English and Translation at Qassim University are expected to be able to think critically and creatively by analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the information they encounter. The communicative approach is the most effective method for stimulating the learning of English because the language contains four core abilities (speaking, reading, listening, and writing), and teaching them is based on the application of analytical thought. Therefore, the communicative approach is the most effective method for stimulating the learning of English. According to what Moore et al. (2001, p. 1) said, "Critical thinking presents students with the opportunity to strengthen their language abilities communicatively". This is due to the fact that, in his words, "reading is viewed as actively constructing meanings on the basis of the material," which requires the reader to investigate and evaluate the concepts included within the text. It is an excellent tool for generating ideas for any form of writing and finding connections between different ideas. According to Hare (1998, pp. 41-42), the Communicative Teaching Approach and creative thinking have the following goals:

1. Making an effort to encourage the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning, which is an endeavor that requires the participation of the students.
2. Inspiring students to participate in meaningful dialogue by posing questions for clarification, expressing their own viewpoints, and expressing whether they agree or disagree with the perspectives of their peers.
3. Enabling activities in the classroom that foster the students' individual language development.
4. Students are better able to reap the benefits of the interplay between various linguistic features when their language learning experiences are placed into bigger settings, such as units of conversation, which are examples of such contexts.

Examining the English essays that were produced by (240) students for the purpose of determining whether or not the students' use of critical thinking and communicative approaches has resulted in an increase in creative problem solving is the major objective of this research. In addition, the development of writing talents requires the development of two key sub-skills: the ability to organize information and the ability to formulate ideas. Finding linkages, arranging issues, and generating connections between ideas are key components of both creative thinking and good writing. Furthermore, achieving these objectives requires original thought Epstein (2019, p. 73).

III. METHODOLOGY

Two hypotheses guide this research: H1: Graduate-level coursework does not include opportunities for original thought; and H2: Paul's E&S of critical thinking can improve creative writing abilities among Arab students at Qassim University.

Both assumptions were tested over the course of ten months of research conducted in the Department of English & Translation at Ar Rass, Qassim University. The population of this study consisted of senior students (n = 140).

Over the course of three seasons (Fall, Spring, and Summer), (140) students submitted a total of (280) essays that were assessed for evidence of creative writing. Teachers of English in the Department of English Language and Translation were given a Likert-scale close-ended questionnaire to assess whether or not the current curriculum of English taught at the graduate level in Qassim University promotes original thinking among the Arabs learners during their graduation years. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used to measure the level of original thinking among these Arabs learners. Careful analysis of the collected data revealed the Arab students' views on the limits of creative thinking and brought attention to the efficacy of the required graduate-level curriculum in English language teaching.

In this cross-sectional study, researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Using the quantitative approach described by Paul's English and Style, a random sample of (240) English essays was assessed in five areas:

1. Readability of the Text
2. Evaluation of the author's argument
3. Evaluation of the author's use of supporting evidence
4. Evaluation of the paper's overall organization (coherence and cohesion)
5. Evaluation of grammar and syntax

Originality in scholastic research writing was evaluated by pre- and post-tests. Prior to Post-tests I and II, students in the course "Research methods: code: ENG 446" were instructed in research writing using Paul's E&S of original thought during the Fall, Spring, and Summer of the 2020/21 academic year. Twelve instructors from the English and Translation Department of Ar Rass, Qassim University provided descriptive information. In order to put H1 to the test, we gave each teacher a 5-minute interview in which we asked about whether or not the required curriculum includes elements that encourage creative thinking among Arab students. The first and second post-tests were designed to evaluate H2, which hypothesizes that Arab students can be taught to think creatively through the development of research writing skills.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were taken to complete these project's objectives. For the purpose of administering the five-point scale questionnaire, a sample group consisting of twelve educators was chosen. They were given the task of writing down their thoughts on whether or not skills in critical thinking were included in the required curriculum for the Bachelor of Arts degree. For the purpose of putting the hypothesis to the test, descriptive statistics and the paired sample t-test were utilized (H1).

Using a quantitative method, we were able to measure the amount of progress made between Post-test I and Post-test II. In order to assess the degree of progress in original thought brought about by research writing, a sample of 140 subjects was selected. During the pre-test, the participants were given prompts on contemporary topics such as global warming, suicide bombing, the message of Islam, smoking, school punishment, and whether or not computers can take the role of teachers. They were required to write between 200 and 250 words on each topic. The research searched for indications that the participants had improved their composition skills, such as greater clarity of writing, level of analysis, use of supporting information, arrangement of ideas, and accuracy of grammar and syntax. Quantitative analysis of the subjects' writing abilities was performed with the help of a rubric that Paul (1997) had developed.

Data Analysis

Table 1 shows data gathered from the English language teachers.

TABLE 1
 PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS OF TEACHERS OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & TRANSLATION, AR RASS

| Mean | N | Std. Deviation | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Cronbach's alpha |
|-------|----|----------------|---------|----|-----------------|------------------|
| 41.12 | 12 | 15.68 | -15.677 | 51 | .000 | 0.60 |

Cronbach's alpha shows 0.60 reliability level in the questionnaire. The Mean Score (MS) was (41.12) with (15.67) Standard Deviation (SD). The t-test value (-15.67) was found to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$. The result was also found significant at $p \geq 0.01$ level of significance.

This outcome disproved hypothesis H1 and provided proof that the mandated curriculum is structured in such a way that it can improve learners' ability to improve their original thinking if and only if it is taught effectively.

In order to generate a triangulation in the results and test the hypotheses discussed earlier, quantitative data was collected from a total of (140) subjects. In order to obtain the results, we carried out three separate tests: the Pre-test, the Post-test I, and the Post-test II. In Table 2, the data was quantified using a scale that ranged from 0 to 4 grade points for Low-range Achievers, Mid-range Achieves, and High-range Achievers respectively. Between the Pre-test and Post-test I & II, as well as between the Post-test I & II comparisons, we used the DS and PS t-tests to examine the effects of the critical thinking instructions provided through EEW.

TABLE 2
 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE THREE TYPES OF TESTS

| | High-range achievers | Mid-range achievers | Low-range achievers |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Pre-test | 3.64 | 2.50 | 2.15 |
| Post-test I | 3.67 | 3.25 | 2.90 |
| Post-test II | 3.75 | 3.50 | 3.35 |

Table 3 and Figure 1 show the comparison between five rubrics over three executions: Pre-test, Post-test I and Post-test II.

TABLE 3
SUBJECTS' ENGLISH RESEARCH WRITING PERFORMANCE IN THREE EXECUTIONS

| | Pre-test | Post-test I | Post-test II |
|--------------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| Clarity | 2.15 | 2.43 | 2.87 |
| Analysis | 1.75 | 2.08 | 2.65 |
| Support | 1.47 | 2.03 | 2.57 |
| Organization | 1.98 | 2.18 | 2.54 |
| Grammar | 1.99 | 2.04 | 2.37 |

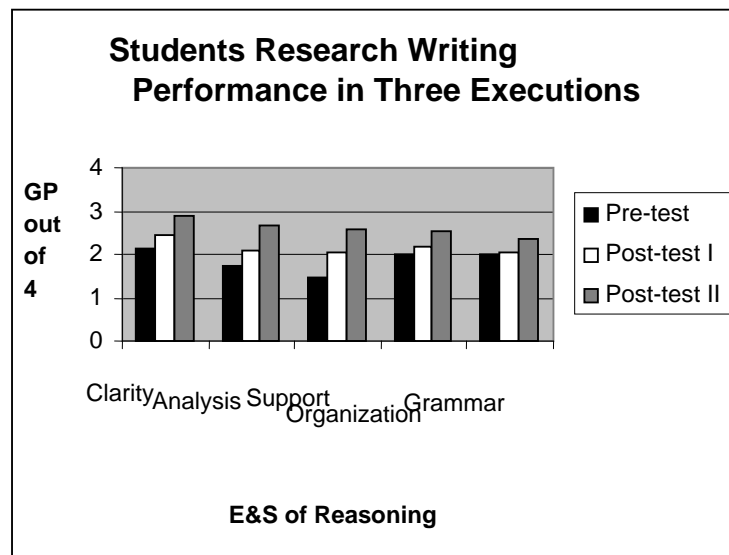


Figure 1. Students Research Writing Performance in Three Executions

The score on all of the available rubrics was lower than (2.00 GP), with the exception of the Clarity rubric; nonetheless, the Support rubric had the lowest score (1.47 GP) when it came to the pre-test. During the Post-test I, the score for each of the five different categories of measurement was above (2.00). The Support category received the lowest possible score of (2.03 GP), while the Clarity category received the highest possible score of (2.43 GP).

On the Post-test II, the score for all of the rubrics was higher than (2.50 GP), with the exception of Grammar, which received a score of (2.37 GP). The Clarity category yielded the highest score possible (2.87 GP). Over the course of the three iterations, the participants' level of critical thinking ability in EEW showed steady progress.

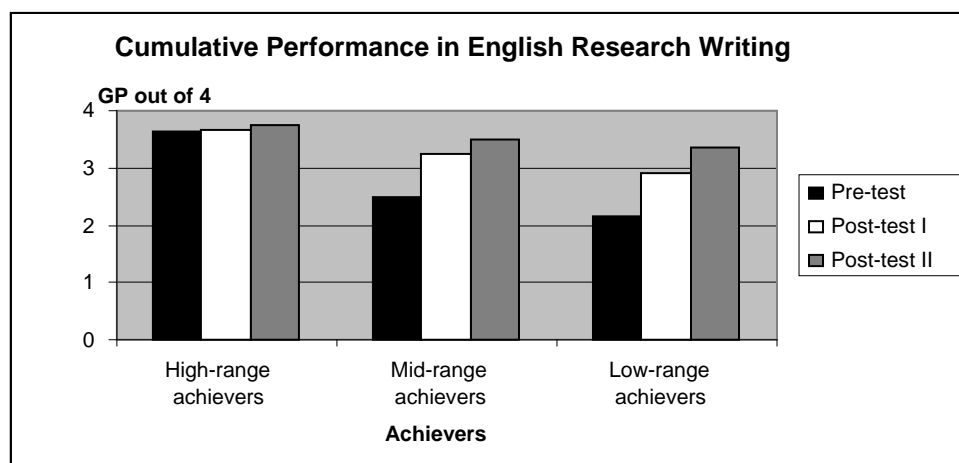


Figure 2. Cumulative Performance in English Research Writing

A comparison of the test scores of those who scored in the high range, those who scored in the midrange, and those who scored in the low range is presented in Figure 2. The cumulative score for the High-range achievers on the pre-test was (3.64 GP), the score for the Mid-range achievers was (2.50 GP), and the score for the Low-range achievers was (2.15 GP). On the Post-test I, the High-range Achievers received a score of (3.67) General Performance, whereas the Mid-range Achievers received a score of (3.25) General Performance, and the Low-range Achievers received a score of (2.90) General Performance. On the Post-test II, those who achieved in the Highest Range received a grade point total

of (3.75), those who achieved in the Midrange received (3.50), and those who achieved in the Lowest Range received (3.35). Even though the High-range Achievers got the highest-grade points (3.75), their performance didn't change much at all; on the other hand, the Low-range Achievers had a notable change in their grade point average (1.20) in their critical thinking ability across all five rubrics in each of the tests. The students who scored in the middle of the distribution showed a significant improvement in critical thinking on the first post-test, but on the second post-test, their performance was relatively unchanged.

V. DISCUSSION

The Low-range achievers experienced a notable shift in their original thinking capacity on five rubrics throughout all of the tests, whereas the High-range achievers maintained a performance that was rather consistent despite having the highest-grade point total (3.75). Mid-range achievers exhibited a significant improvement in their critical thinking during the Post-test I, but during the Post-test II, their performance was relatively unchanged. According to the findings of the study, the use of critical thinking pedagogy had a greater impact on students whose grades fell in the Low-range, Mid-range, and High-Range categories.

Low-range achievers had a low affective filter for the assimilation of critical thinking pedagogy. High-range achievers, on the other hand, exhibited a high affective filter, which prevented them from making a major development in their critical writing skill. It was hypothesized that the Low-range performers gained the most from the original thinking pedagogy, followed by the Mid-range achievers, and then the High-range achievers. The low-range achievers had high motivation, high self-esteem, and a low emotional filter, all of which assisted them in improving their critical writing ability.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current research was to find answers to two questions: (a) to what extent does the graduate curriculum challenge students to think critically and (b) how can unique thinking be integrated in ELT to enhance creative writing skills among Arab graduate students? A Paired Samples t-test was carried out for the purpose of investigating the hypotheses. The null hypothesis was validated using the p 0.05 threshold of significance. What this entails is that the curriculum for the Bachelor of Arts degree must include some form of innovative problem solving. The alternative hypothesis was supported when p 0.05 and p 0.01 were used as significance criteria. That is to say, developing and supporting students' ability for creative thought can be facilitated by bringing Paul's E&S of reasoning into the teaching of English Essay Writing. This can be done in a number of different ways. The results of the students drastically improved as a direct consequence of being instructed to think creatively for the purposes of their research writing (mean score of 41.26). There was a statistically significant difference between Post-test I's results and Post-test II's results. To put this another way, this demonstrates that improving students' critical thinking skills through the use of Paul's E&S of original thought in the context of the English Research Writing curriculum is beneficial.

The subjects demonstrated a constant improvement in their critical thinking skills between the first and second post-tests that were administered to them. Low-range performers saw improvements in critical thinking that were much lower (1.20 cumulative GP) compared to High-range and Mid-range achievers. The students who scored in the Low-range Achievers demonstrated significant growth in their capacity for innovative thinking across all five rubrics, whereas the students who scored in the High-range Achievers maintained a rather consistent performance across all examinations. At the end of the first post-test, the Midachievers' critical thinking had greatly improved, but at the end of the second post-test, it had not been changed at all. These conclusions are in line with what was obtained by Ennis (1991), Fairclough (2001), Brown (2004) and Cottrell (2005).

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