

**An Investigation of EFL Students' Attitudes towards the Relationship between
Creative Writing and Reading Motivation: The Case of First-year Master Students
(Option TEFL) at Oum El Bouaghi University**

التحقيق في مواقف طلبة اللغة الانجليزية حول علاقة الكتابة الإبداعية بدافعية القراءة

دراسة لعينة من طلبة ماستر تخصص تعليمية اللغة بجامعة العربي بن مهيدي ، أم البواقي

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Abstract :

ملخص :

Reading motivation is the cornerstone of learning the foreign language, and creative writing is the gate that helps understand the logistics of the language. Accordingly, this paper aims at investigating the students' attitudes about whether or not there is a relationship between creative writing and reading motivation. A questionnaire is used as a data collection tool. It was addressed to 25 first year master students (option TEFL) at Oum El Bouaghi University. The participants claimed that creative writing is beneficial at many levels, but still there is reluctance in practicing it. The results also showed that there is an interrelationship between creative writing and the motivation to read because if the students start to write in a creative way on a regular basis, they will be passionate towards writing and they will seek for ways that make their writing prosperous. Thus, their reading motivation will be boosted because reading is the main source of vocabulary learning.

Keywords : creative writing, reading motivation, students' attitudes, interrelationship.

يعتبر تحفيز دافعية القراءة لدى الطلبة حجر الزاوية في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية، وتعد الكتابة لوجيستيات الإبداعية كبوابة لفهم اللغة. بناء عليه فإن هذا المقال يهدف إلى استطلاع مواقف الطلبة حول ما إذا كانت هناك علاقة بين الكتابة الإبداعية و دافعية القراءة، وقد استخدم الاستبيان كأداة لجمع البيانات من عينة قوامها 25 طالب ماستر I تخصص تعليمية اللغة في جامعة أم البواقي. أكد الطلاب أن الكتابة الإبداعية مفيدة على عدة مستويات، ولكن بالرغم من ذلك لا يزال هناك تردد في ممارستها، كما أظهرت النتائج أن هناك علاقة متبادلة بين الكتابة الإبداعية ودافعية القراءة، حيث أن انتظام الطلاب في الكتابة ، حفزهم للاستمرار فيها ،باحثين عن طرق تجعل كتاباتهم راقية.، وهو ما عزز دافعتهم للقراءة أكثر. باعتبارها المصدر الرئيسي لاكتساب المفردات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الإبداعية، دافعية القراءة، مواقف الطلبة، علاقة متبادلة

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INTRODUCTION:

Research in the field of language learning has proved the efficiency of creative writing as a means to master the language logistics. It became a subject of interest for many scholars and researchers. So, the purpose behind establishing a creative writing curriculum for EFL learners is to ameliorate and develop the quality of their writings for better communication of their ideas, and to enhance their desire towards reading literature. This latter represents a weakness for many EFL students who rarely read a literary book. Their motivation to read literature is so frail, though its countless benefits in improving their skills in general. Reading may help enrich the students' vocabulary repertoire and thinking skills as well. Reading literature is noteworthy. EFL students need to be aware of its effectiveness to improve their level in learning the language and realize its value to better accomplish their objectives.

Thus, it is conventionally known that reading helps the students develop their writing potentials in general. Writing can also contribute in the enhancement of reading motivation. An attempt to dig deeper on the interrelationship which exists between creative writing and reading motivation is the main concern of this research.

I. Literature Review:**I.1. What is Creative Writing?**

Creative writing is viewed by many scholars as an imaginative and artistic way of writing. It is made up of two words: creativity which entails the use of imagination and visualization, and writing which is the interpretation of one's ideas, thoughts, and emotions into a script.

Creative writing is defined as "having the power to create an imaginative, original literary production or composition." (Chamber Dictionary as cited in Ramet, 2007, p. xi). That is to say, creative writing is different from academic writing. This latter does not entail the involvement of the writer's emotions and feelings. But rather academic writers should follow some standards as objectivity and factuality...etc. However, creative writing is considered as a gate that helps in getting free from the conventional types of writing on one hand and escaping from the long-established ideas of authorship. So, it has to be characterized as a distinct and unique type of writing (Brophy, K 1998, p. 34 as cited in Dawson, 2005, p. 21).

The phrase creative writing has several meanings. It operates as an equivalent for literature; that includes fiction, poetry and drama. It is ascertained that "creative writing is a way for students to express themselves in new and exciting ways" (Ramet, 2007, p. 11). This means that creative writing denotes the notion of communicating one's ideas in a manner that stimulates and attracts readers' minds and feelings.

Moreover, writing in a creative way is not easy and effortless activity, no matter what point or stage the writer reaches, he/she should always be

considered as a trainee because the path to achieve such creativity is long and the course is everlasting.

To be a creative writer Mills (2006) claimed that you have to ‘fall in love with words’ (p.14). Words are the means with which one can create an imaginative world by digging into his/her deep inside and with the use of other aids like inspiration, imagination and visualization to accomplish an artistic work that would take the reader away from his/her real world.

I.2. Teaching Creative Writing:

In fact, teaching creative writing is necessary just like the teaching of academic writing where the students develop their talent of writing, and share their creativity with others, and thus develop their English level as well. “Creative writing courses are an integral and indispensable part of university education, because they interconnect intellectual and creative exploration” (Smith, 2005, p. vii). So, EFL students should be involved into creative writing’s workshops and courses for its efficiency in learning the language.

Creativity has nowadays become popular in the field of education because of its effectiveness in the development of the learners’ potentials. Many scholars encourage teachers to involve their students into creative writing. This latter serves the role of flourishing new ideas that aid in obtaining better results. It is a motivational power that boosts the students’ capacities forward.

I.3. Creative Writing Requirements:

Creative writing is not an easy skill to be acquired; however, it requires from the student to know what to write first, and to whom the writer is addressing his/her message. He also needs to specify his /her purpose behind writing. So, as academic writing involves a set of stages such as drafting and revising, before reaching the final product, in addition to these stages, creative writing also involves a deep concentration and a range of catchy vocabulary that aid the writer to better express his/her ideas.

The most important thing without which creative writing cannot be realized is imagination which is considered as the core of creativity. It helps in constructing and shaping concepts and images that do not necessarily exist in reality through using the mind and feelings that would give those images and concepts soul, which in turn makes them vivid and alive. Imagination is the fertilized land that makes creativity grow.

I.4. Genres of Creative writing:

Creative writing is categorized differently according to many scholars Harmer, (2005, p. 259) sees that the major types of creative writing include: stories, plays and poetry. He considers the desire of the work to be read and the feeling of being pride as a sharing point amongst writers. Anderson (2006, p. 2) states that poetry, fiction and non-fiction are the main types of creative writing.

I.4.1. Story:

Story or a “narrative prose” as it is named by Bowkett (2009) who mentioned that “a story is a kind of sequence of pictures that we place in our readers’ minds through the power of the words we use” (p. 15). This means that when someone reads a story, he/she will live the details of the story and imagine the events and the characters as he /she really sees them. That happens when the writer succeeds in conveying and describing his ideas in a visualized way.

Hynes, (2014, p. 4) claimed that the writer of a story has “... to draw readers in and capture their curiosity.” This latter can be realized through the strategy followed: showing vs. telling which means that the writer should not inform the reader about the events and the details of the story. Instead he /she has to show the details. This can be realized by engaging the reader with all his/her senses as he /she lives and experiences the details.

EFL teachers may help their students to write and develop a story through several steps by showing them a concrete example of a short story and analyzing it, then taking it as a sample to write their own. They have to learn how to choose a theme, characters, a plot, and to imagine the time, place and events of the story.

I.4.2. Poetry:

Poetry is a sort of verbal or written language which is formed metrically; and which is intended to narrate a story or convey ideas, emotions and feelings. Poetry is very old and even more ancient than print cultures (Wainwright, 2004, p. 12). The most important thing about writing poetry is the selection of words. Simultaneously, Galens (2004, p. ix) also claimed that the job of the poet is much concerned with the choice of the right words. For him, those words will change the readers’ lives and push them to see the world differently.

Poetry shares some characteristics with music as beat and rhythm. It has a significant influence on readers. It is noticed that many people are addicted to some poets and to some pieces of poetry that are kept memorized and repeated when ever needed.

I.4.3. Play writing:

The playwriting is similar to story writing, as claimed by Lawson (2014) since both involve a plot, setting, characters, and events. However, Plays are distinguished from stories by their acts and scenes through which the script is organized. In a play, the writer develops the details in a form of a dialogue where the characters communicate their ideas. The script of the play can be easily performed by actors like Shakespeare’s plays ‘Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet’. In constructing a play, the writer creates a captivating line of tension along the play that stimulates the readers’ attention.

I.5. Reading Motivation Definition:

Researchers tackle motivation for reading in the first language, but very few attempts have been made about reading motivation in a foreign language

(Mori, 2002, p. 91). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) hold that “reading motivation is the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (p. 405). Reading is related to the individual’s objectives and principles with respect to the subjects and topics that interest him or her. This means that motivation with its aspects and features (intrinsic and extrinsic) interferes in the reading activity. It controls the student’s desire of reading. Wigfield, Gladstone and Turci (2016) see that being confident and having a certain level of self-efficacy contribute in the achievement of the assigned tasks and goals. Besides, they claim that valuing the tasks of reading by checking their importance, interest and usefulness for students would engage them into reading and raise their motivation.

It is claimed that the concept of reading motivation is a complex one because it deals with human psychology, which is itself a tough subject as advocated by several scholars. “Reading motivation has been viewed as a multifaceted construct with multiple constituents... (interest, perceived control, collaboration, involvement, and efficacy) (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, Littles, 2006, p. 282). This characteristic of multiplicity influences the learners’ choice and decision, as when the students show interest, and believe that they are successful in performing a reading task, their motivation is going to be affected along with their achievement outcome.

A reader who is motivated is the one who has a willingness to get involved in reading more and is supposed to apply the required strategies and to have an interaction with the text and could construct knowledge (Guthrie et al., 2004). Simultaneously, Guthrie and Wigfield, (1999) also view that reading motivation “influences the individual’s activities, interactions, and learning with text” (p. 199).

I.6. The Problem of Reading in the Foreign Language:

Reading becomes increasingly really demanding nowadays because of its significant role that it plays in improving the students’ level in the mastery of the foreign language. But, it is noticed that the majority of the students do not practice reading. So, they only read when they are requested to do a task. That is to say, they read subjects related to their studies, their motivation to read is restricted to their academic goals. However, Reading literature is not practiced by the majority of the EFL students.

I.7. Reading and Writing Interrelationship:

Research in the field of language learning has proved that there is an interaction between reading and writing. It is believed that the practice of reading helps the students acquire the necessary vocabulary that allow them to write. So, reading improves writing. As hold by Tavares (n.d) “by orienting the students to read in search of meaning, the type and amount of reading material to which they are exposed will influence their choice of topic, writing style and vocabulary while writing.” (p. 60).

Writing may also improve the students' reading skill, as it is maintained by Tavares (n.d) who states that "by incorporating writing activities into reading lessons, student are encouraged to approach reading in the same way writers do it, when they research a topic, develop a draft, research and develop their text. Thus, when students perceive the structure of a text, they comprehend better what they are reading as well as learn the subject easily" (p. 62). This means that integrating writing tasks within reading ones may help the students to comprehend the texts being read.

Additionally, Nemouchi, (2014) argues that reading literature is not only a nurturing tool that feeds writing, instead writing could be very beneficial for reading, he says that "literature is no more seen as a feeder for writing but as a recipient" (p. 11). So, when the students get involved into writing tasks and activities, their desire and motivation to read will be increased.

II- Methods and Materials:

In order to check whether or not there is a relation between creative writing and reading motivation, a questionnaire has been selected as a tool of data collection.

II. 1. Population and Sampling:

The sample of this study consists of 25 first year master students (option: TEFL) at the English Department of Larbi Ben M'Hidi University. 76% of the participants are females, while 24% are males, and their age range from 21 to 30 years. (These are the answers of Q1 and Q2). The reason behind choosing this population is the repertoire of vocabulary that is expected to be owned and which allow them to get involved into creative writing.

II. 2. Description of the Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is made up of 11 questions that are distributed into 03 sections. The first section aims at extracting general information about the participants: age and gender. The second section is about the students' attitudes towards creative writing which consists of 06 questions. The last section is devoted to reading motivation and creative writing. This last section comprises of 03 questions. Some of the questions are closed ended with a yes –no preference, or multiple choice, and others are open-ended.

III-Results and Discussion:

The results will direct us to rather approve or disapprove if there is a relationship between creative writing and reading motivation from the students' perspective.

III.1. Analysis of the Results:

Question Three

Do you practice writing in English in your free time?

| Option | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| Yes | 72% |
| No | 28% |

The data show that 72% of the respondents hold that they practice writing in English, on the contrary 28 % of the participants do not practice writing in their free time. The result reflects the awareness of the students towards the importance of the writing skill to master the English language.

Question Four

Do you write in a creative way?

| Option | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| Yes | 40% |
| No | 60% |

The table above shows that 40 % of the students stated that they practice creative writing. The result may explain the willingness they have and the joy they find when writing in that way, because creative writing is not part of the curriculum for the target sample. So, they are not obliged to write in creative way. This result is encouraging to some extent and showed that those students are eager to stimulate their imagination and their creative potentials. However, 60% of the respondents claimed that they do not practice it which may mean that they are more interested into academic writing to attain their academic goals, or they just write when they are requested to do by their teachers.

Question Five

If yes, what genres do you write?

- a - poetry
- b - fiction/ story
- c - play
- Others please specify

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| Option | Percentage |
|----------------------|------------|
| Poetry | 50% |
| Story writing | 20% |
| Play | 10% |
| Poetry+story writing | 10% |
| Free essays | 10% |

The respondents, who claimed that they practice creative writing, were offered three choices: poetry, fiction/story, play, and they were asked to pick the genre that they practice when writing creatively. The results show that 50 % of the participants opted for fiction which means that they are more interested in creating plots, finding solutions to problems imagining characters and so on... 20 % picked poetry this reflects their love of rhythm and rhyme that generally characterize poetry and the way vocabulary is selected to stimulate both the writer and the reader's attention. However, 10% opted for playwriting which means the turn taking of roles that characters play in the story as we generally do in life. 10% also chose both poetry and fiction, The

last 10 % claimed that he/she writes free essays without being limited to any specific genre of creative writing.

Question Six

What are the reasons that hinder you from writing in a creative way?

- a- Lack of interest
- b- Lack of vocabulary
- c- Lack of confidence
- Others, please specify

| Option | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|
| Lack of vocabulary | 62.5% |
| Lack of interest | 37.5% |
| Lack of confidence | 0% |
| Others | 0% |

As mentioned above, 62.50% claimed that lack of vocabulary is the main reason that hinders them from writing creatively and this explains their lack of reading literature since it is the main source that helps enrich the students' vocabulary. 37.5 % of the subjects opted for lack of interest towards creative writing which explains their demotivation. No one opted for the third choice and no one added any other reasons.

Question Seven

Do you want to improve your writing style?

| Option | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| Yes | 96% |
| No | 4% |

96% of the respondents claimed that they are interested in improving their writing style, while only 4% show no interest. This may reflect the value that students give to the writing skill since it is the means that help communicate their ideas when they are involved into writing tasks and exams.

Question Eight

What are the benefits of practicing creative writing?

The students were given an open ended question concerning the benefits that can be drawn from practicing creative writing. 76 % of the participants replied and 24% of them did not. The students' responses turn around the following ideas:

- Creative writing helps us express ourselves the way we want communicate our ideas.
- It increases our motivation to read literature in English.
- It broadens our imagination.
- It improves our thinking skills.
- It helps us feel at ease.

- It raises our self-esteem.

Most students see that creative writing is beneficial as it is not helpful for developing language skills only, but it may also help in reinforcing thinking skills and treating personality problems as developing the students' self-esteem and confidence.

Question Nine

How often do you practice reading in your free time?

Always often sometimes rarely never

| Option | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|
| Always | 0% |
| Often | 12% |
| Sometimes | 26% |
| Rarely | 62% |
| Never | 0% |

The participants were given five choices and they were asked to opt for one choice. The data show that 12% of the respondents opted for often, While 26% picked sometimes. However, the majority of participants 62% claimed that they rarely read. The result clarifies that most students do not practice reading regularly, and they lack the desire and willingness to do so.

Question Ten

How do you evaluate your reading motivation level?

Very low low average high very high

| Option | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|
| Very low | 24% |
| Low | 34% |
| Average | 36% |
| High | 6% |
| Very high | 0% |

The data displayed in the above table show that 24 % of the participants claimed that their reading motivation is very low. 34% demonstrated low level. However, 36% claimed that their reading motivation level is average, while 6% stated that their reading motivation is high. Consequently, the reading motivation level of the participant is rather frustrating, most students read subjects that are related with what they study to attain academic goals rather than to nourish their vocabulary stock.

Question Eleven

Do you agree that if the students are involved into creative writing, this may boost their reading motivation.

| Option | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| Yes | 82% |
| No | 18% |

The results show that 18% of the respondents opposed the idea that creative writing helps to increase the motivation to read. However, 82% of the students claimed that motivation to read can be boosted through engaging the students into creative writing, because to succeed in writing a creative piece one should read and acquire more vocabulary to better express his/her ideas.

III.2. Discussion of the Findings:

The analysis of the students' questionnaire revealed that the students who practice writing in their free time manifest at least an average level of reading motivation and those who are not interested in writing have a low level of reading motivation.

On the light of the obtained results, it is concluded that there is an ignorance of the skill of reading, 62% claimed that they rarely read. The problem of reading can be solved if the students are engaged in writing because their deficiency in vocabulary and style will push them to read.

It is noteworthy to highlight that the majority of the students see that creative writing is beneficial; however, few students do practice it. This result reflects the students' awareness of the benefits of creative writing, and their lack of motivation and laziness in practicing it.

The results also revealed that 82% of the students agree that involving them into creative writing's workshops and tasks would increase their motivation to read because once they start expressing themselves creatively, they will be eager to discover other writers' styles and ideas, and they may follow or imitate a certain writer's style. The lack of vocabulary, which they suffer from, can be treated if they practice both reading and writing.

Conclusion:

The focus of this study is to investigate whether or not creative writing and reading motivation are interrelated by questioning first year master one students' (option TEFL) at Oum El Bouaghi University. Developing students' reading motivation is essential for the improvement of the students' target language. It influences their achievement and involvement in and outside the classroom. Highly motivated learners are found to be interested in writing and creative writing. This latter can be suggested as a solution to urge the students to read more to succeed in expressing themselves in a thriving way. Nowadays, Creative writing has proved its effectiveness for the learning of the foreign language in general all over the world to better convey ideas and produce the language, and reading is the skill that should not be marginalized.

Consequently, reading motivation and creative writing are complementary, and the involvement in one helps in the improvement of the other. Hence, as a recommendation for further research works empirical studies should tackle this issue using experiments which can statistically illustrate the relationship between creative writing and reading motivation.

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Appendix 01: Students' Questionnaire

Dear student,

We would be deeply grateful if you fill in the following questionnaire for a research on "Investigating Students' Attitudes towards the Efficiency of Creative Writin Improving EFL Students' Reading Motivation" The Case of Master One Didactic Students at Larbi Ben M'hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi.

To answer the questionnaire, please make a tick to the answer you think most appropriate to express your opinion.

Section One: Background Information

Q1: Age:

Q2: Gender: male female

Section Two: Students' Attitudes towards Creative Writing

Q3: Do you practice writing in English in your free time?

Yes No

Q4: Do you write in a creative way?

Yes No

Q5: If yes, what genres do you write?

- poetry
- fiction/ story
- play
- Others please specify

.....
Q6: What are the reasons that hinder you from writing in a creative way?

- Lack of interest
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of vocabulary

Other reasons, please specify.

.....
Q7: Do you want to improve your writing style?

Yes No

Q8: What are the benefits of practicing creative writing?

Section Three: Students' Attitudes towards Reading Motivation and Creative Writing

Q9. How often do you practice reading in your free time?

Always often sometimes rarely never

Q10. How do you evaluate your reading motivation level?

Very low low average high very high

Q11. Do you agree that involving the students into creative writing boosts their reading motivation?

Yes No

Thank you for your cooperation