

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF TASK TYPE ON CREATIVITY IN WRITINGS OF ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study investigates task types' impact on creativity in ESL learners' writings. The research design used for the study was a mixed-method approach. To ensure the impact of task type on creativity in writing of ESL learners, 50 undergraduate students (males=10, females=40) from different departments were selected by convenience sampling. Two writing tasks were performed, one was imaginative writing and the other was picture interpretation. Writing tasks were marked according to the "Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) rubric. One sample t-test was used to compare the results of both writing tasks. Results showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both tasks indicating that there is an impact of task type on creativity in the writings of ESL learners. These findings have significance for educators and curriculum designers as they highlight the need to add creative writing projects in ESL language training to foster students' creativity.

Keywords: mixed-method approach, convenience sampling, imaginative writing, picture interpretation, Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, one sample t-test

Introduction

Task type is the classification or categorizing of various tasks or assignments according to their features, specifications, and goals. To better comprehend their nature and develop strategies for completing them, tasks can be divided into distinct sorts in a variety of contexts, such as education, the workplace, or problem-solving.

The ability to produce new, innovative, and original ideas by using imagination is called creativity. It entails thinking outside the box, deviating from established patterns, and fusing already-existing components in fresh ways to create something original and inventive. Creativity can be used in a variety of areas outside of the arts, including problem-solving, scientific research, technological development, business, and more. It is a vital component of human cognition and has propelled civilizational advancement throughout history.

Creativity in writing allows us to convey our thoughts, ideas, experiences, and perspectives by exploring our language and structure that should be original, not a copy of something that exists already. Writing creatively is crucial for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners because it improves language engagement, critical thinking, and language proficiency (Weigle, 2002). Different kinds of writing tasks play a crucial role in shaping students' creativity, as task structure and cognitive demand affect the extent of originality, novelty, and fluency in written works.

The degree and kind of creative output can be significantly impacted by the link between task type and creativity. The structure of a task can affect the creative process and the results, and different work types can either encourage or discourage innovation. Open-ended activities, which permit a variety of answers and interpretations, frequently foster creativity. People are more likely to come up with fresh and cutting-edge ideas when they are allowed to consider several strategies and options. On the other hand, projects that are very structured or have strict boundaries may be a hindrance to creativity. When people are forced to adhere to strict rules or have few options. Thus, the relationship between the task type and creativity is complex. While some tasks are more suited to encouraging creativity, creativity itself can appear in a variety of contexts. In various situations, promoting a supportive and collaborative environment, encouraging experimentation and risk-taking, and providing a balance of open-ended and organized work can all help to increase creativity.

Research Objectives

This research investigates

- the impact of task type on creativity in the writing of ESL learners.
- that how the task type affects the level of creativity.
- that how does task difficulty affect the ability to write creatively

Null Hypothesis: There is no impact of task type on creativity in the writings of ESL learners.

Research Questions

- i. What impact does task type have on creativity in the writing of ESL learners?
- ii. How does the task type affect the level of creativity in writing of ESL learners?
- iii. How does task difficulty affect the ability to write creatively

Significance

This study is significant because it serves with insightful information about the impact of task type on creativity in writing of ESL learners in both ways either hindering or fostering the ideas. This study is effective for teachers on how their improved language teaching strategies can enhance the creativity of the learners. Findings can help educators create an ESL curriculum that emphasizes originality in writing assignments. The integration of creative writing possibilities into different task types can aid in the linguistic development of students and inspire them to think creatively.

Literature Review

Background knowledge

The Latin word *creare*, which means to produce or bring forth, is the source of the English word *create*. The words "creative" and "product" imply both production and inventiveness. Every aspect of life, including problem-solving, building, teaching, and writing, requires creativity. Lubart (1999) stated that when the task is completed by creating new and original things or products and putting a variety of perspectives, viewpoints, and ideas according to the particular requirements and expectations of the task, that is called creativity.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emphasizes the use of meaningful tasks to aid language learning, has become a popular approach in language education. With exercises that mimic real-world scenarios, TBLT, which is based on the ideas of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), moves the emphasis away from traditional grammar instruction and toward involving students in realistic language use.

According to research, TBLT encourages learners' creativity in addition to improving their language skills. In one study, Gandhioke and Singh (2024) studied 200 university students, which showed that including art-based activities, such painting and drawing, into English language

instruction not only enhanced language proficiency but also imaginative thinking and narrative skills. Likewise, it has been demonstrated that task-based writing interventions enhance the writing abilities and inventiveness of EFL students.

Despite these realizations, there is still a dearth of studies explicitly looking at how various task kinds affect creativity in ESL settings. Knowing this relationship is essential because it helps teachers create assignments that foster creativity in addition to language acquisition, preparing students for challenging problem-solving in real-world situations.

By examining the impact of various task types on the creative levels of ESL learners, this study seeks to close this gap and offer empirical support for pedagogical techniques in language instruction.

This background section provides a clear justification for investigating the relationship between task types and creative output in ESL learning contexts by placing your research within the body of existing literature on TBLT and creativity.

Past Studies

TEMİZKAN (2011), investigated the impact of creative writing activities on story writing skills. An unmatched control group design that is semi-experimental, is used in this research. The research sample is taken from the Turkish Language Teaching Department of the Ghazi Education Faculty of Ghazi University which consists of 60 students of 2 sections 1\A, and 1\B of the evening class. The research sample is further divided into two groups, an experimental group (n=30), and a control group (n=30). The Creative writing activities as treatment were implemented for participants in the experimental group while the control group participants were kept under traditional conditions of writing. Treatment to the experimental group is given for a period of 10 weeks and then the evaluation for creative writing activities is done according to the scale for story writing skill. Results show that the activities of creative writing are more effective than traditional ways of writing in improving the level of creativity.

Additionally, (Marashi & Dadari, 2012) measured the impact of task-based writing on EFL learners' writing performance and creativity. For this study, the sample size of 56 female Iranian EFL learners was chosen from a population of 89 learners at the intermediate level. The selection was done based on their performance on a sample piloted PET. Based on the results of the test, the students were randomly assigned to a control group and an experimental group, each with 28 participants. Pre-tests were conducted before giving the treatment. One was the writing test (part of PET) and the other was the Abedi-Schumacher Creativity Test (ACT). In treatment, 18 sessions had the same level of teaching and writing topics but there was one difference kept between both groups, writing activities (task-based) were performed by the experimental group while the control group was not asked to perform any of the activities. Then, at the end of the treatment sessions, a writing test (another PET) and the ACT were conducted for both groups. The results show that learners significantly benefited from task-based writing activities and improved their creativity.

Similarly, (TOK & KANDEMİR, 2014) conducted an experimental study to investigate the impact of creative writing activities on creativity in writing. The experimental study was done in the 7th grade to check students' achievements in writing skills, writing dispositions, and their attitudes to English. The study was conducted within the period of 4 weeks of the academic year 2012-2013 in an elementary school in the city of Turkey. The study involved one group pre-test and post-test design. Participants were 31 in total, 17 females and 14 male students. A writing activity was assigned to students and they were requested to write some paragraphs expressing that someone they know very well in their life. The writing tests were marked according to the "Scoring Profile"

(Jacobs et al., 1981) which consisted of five parts. The student's attitude toward the English course was evaluated with the "Attitude Scale for Elementary English Course" developed by Baş (2012) and consisted of 27 segments. To confirm the specific distribution of collected data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Test was used. A paired sample t-test was done for data analysis. Results indicated that creative activities positively affect students' writing achievements.

Moreover, Ahmed and Bidin (2016) measured the effectiveness of TBLT in promoting the writing skills of EFL learners at the undergraduate level. The studies were conducted at public-sector universities in Malaysia. The Quasi experimental study was done, and participants were divided into 2 groups, an experimental group, and a control group. The mixed method research method was used for data collection. Pretest and posttest were conducted. A paired-sample t-test was used to determine the statistical significance difference between the results of the pre-test and post-test. Most students expressed the opinion in their reflection journal that TBLT is the most interesting and student-centered approach to enable students to use existing language resources.

Similarly, Dirgeyasa (2018) investigated the effect of TBLT on ESOL learners' creativity in writing. Experimental research has been done for this study, two groups, an experimental and a control group were made having 30 students in each group. Both groups were taught through TBLT and classical methods respectively. Pre-test and post-test were conducted from both groups and a t-test in SPSS version 21 was used to tabulate the data. This showed that there was a significant difference between the performance of the learners who were taught with TBLT and the classical methods. Learners taught with TBLT performed very well in the post-test as compared to the students taught with the classical method.

Moreover, Artes et al., (2019) did an experiment to check the impact of task type on payment. Participants were taken from the UCI laboratory. They all were invited by ESSL staff in charge of recruitment and signed up through the ESSL website. They were given initial instructions regarding tasks and the whole experiment on computers. Some of the incentives like competition, time pressure, high stakes pay, and piece rate pay were there. All of these incentives were evaluated as compared to the usual and non-performance payments. Participants were supposed to perform routine, creative, and problem-solving tasks. In this experimental study, task types and pressure both were tested. The results showed that creativity differs across different task types and incentives being offered.

Moreover, (Turkel & Cetinkaya, 2020) measured the impact of creative writing activities on the writing attitudes of students and their success. Quasi experimental research with quantitative methods has been done. The study involved two groups, a control group, and an experimental group. 41 students in grade 6th participated which were further divided into control group (n=20) and experimental group(n=21). The control group was taught with the conventional method while creative writing activities were implemented in the experimental group. Creative writing activities were conducted for an experimental group with two lesson plans per week for a ten-week long schedule while a writing activity with a topic was assigned to the control group which the experimental group has already done to eliminate the effect of writing. A post-test was conducted by following the experimental procedure. For data analysis, an independent t-test and paired test were used. After the post-test regarding attitudes and achievements, a comparison was done which showed a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group, which showed that creative writing activities positively affect the writing attitude of students and their success.

Additionally, (Xu et al., 2022) studied the impact of the sensory experience of sweetness on creativity. 250 North American students participated from the online research panel, and five taste conditions were imagined which were sour, sweet, salty, bitter, and neutral. Everybody was

randomly assigned one of them. The results showed that the sensory experience of sweetness increases creativity in relevant tasks.

Literature gap

Previous research demonstrated the effects of creative writing exercises on story writing, TBLT on the writing creativity of EFL learners, creative writing exercises on creative writing, TBLT on the promotion of writing skills, TBLT on the writing creativity of ESOL learners, sensory effects of sweetness on creativity, and task type on labor payment. The effect of task type on ESL learners' writing creativity has not yet been studied. This leaves a hole for future research. The study can help to give a more thorough knowledge of how the strategic organization of task types can promote and maintain the development of creativity in language learners by bridging this gap.

Research Methodology

The research design used for the study is a mixed-method design. The data was collected in the form of a writing prompt which was evaluated qualitatively and then analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.

Population

All undergraduate students of Government College University are the population of this study.

Sampling

Convenience sampling has been done to collect data. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling where the units are added to the sample as they are easy targets for the researcher, or they are willing to participate in a research study (Wienclaw, 2019).

Sample size

The sample size for the study 50 undergraduate students from different departments of Government College University Faisalabad were accessed to conduct the study.

Data Collection

Data collection was done from undergraduate students of different departments at the University and hostel. Two different writing tasks were conducted on the same students to check the impact of task type on creativity in the writings of ESL learners. One of them was the imaginative writing task and the prompt for writing was “You have the technology to invent anything you want to do whatever your imagination thinks up. What is this grand invention, and what happens when you invent it?”, and the other task was “picture interpretation”. Students were given two pictures and they were supposed to interpret what they perceived by seeing them. They were given 30 to 40 minutes for each task as per IELTS instructions for conducting a writing task.

Data Analysis Tool

Writing tasks were evaluated according to a scoring rubric, an adapted version of the “Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT)”, having subscales of fluency, flexibility, and originality used to score the writing tasks. One sample t-test was done on SPSS to compare the results of both tasks.

Results and Findings

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Imaginative Writing	50	13.00	36.00	31.82	5.09

Picture Interpretation	50	10.00	35.00	26.71	5.53
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Note: N = number of participants

The two different task types that were utilized in the study to evaluate the creativity of ESL learners' writings are listed in the first column, which are "Imaginative Writing," and "Picture Interpretation." The "N" column indicates how many participants or samples there were for each task type. Each task type in this study had 50 ESL students, for a total sample size of 100 participants. The minimal creative score attained for each assignment type is displayed in the "Minimum" column. The lowest scores indicated for "Imaginative Writing" and "Picture Interpretation," were 13 points and 10 points, respectively. The maximum creative score attained for each assignment type is shown in the "Maximum" column. The highest marks were 36.00 for "Imaginative Writing," and 35.00 for "Picture Interpretation." The average creativity rating for each assignment type can be seen in the "Mean" column. The average score for "Imaginative Writing" was 31.8200, and for "Picture Interpretation," it was 26.7100. The standard deviation of the creative scores for each task type is displayed in the "Std. Deviation" column. It displays the degree of the scores deviating from the mean. Greater variation in creativity scores within the task type is indicated by higher values. The standard deviation was 5.09478 for "Imaginative Writing," and 5.53199 for "Picture Interpretation." The total number of full cases or data points for all variables in the analysis is shown in this column Valid N(listwise). The valid N in this study was 50, meaning that all 100 individuals provided complete data for the analysis.

Table 2

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Imaginative writing	50	31.82	5.09	.72
Picture interpretation	50	26.71	5.53	.78

The standard error of the mean, which calculates the sample mean's standard deviation, is shown in the "Std. Error Mean" column. It shows how accurately the sample mean represents the population mean. The standard error of the mean for the "Imaginative Writing" task was 0.72051, and for the "Picture Interpretation" task, it was 0.78234.

The "Imaginative Writing" standard error of the mean (0.72051) is smaller than the "Picture Interpretation" standard error of the mean (0.78234). In comparison to the "Picture Interpretation" task, the "Imaginative Writing" task's mean score is more accurate and nearer to the genuine population mean because of its smaller standard error.

Table 2

One sample t-test

Test value = 0	
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Imaginative writing	44.16	49	.000	31.82	30.37	33.26
Picture Interpretation	34.14	49	.000	26.71	25.13	28.28

Note: df = degree of freedom

The t-value is a measurement of the variance within the groups in relation to the difference between the means of the two groups. The t-value for "Imaginative Writing" is 44.163, and the t-value for "Picture Interpretation" is 34.141. Both t-tests have 49 degrees of freedom. Critical values from the t-distribution are calculated using degrees of freedom. The p-value, which assumes there is no actual difference between the means of the two groups, shows the likelihood of achieving the observed results. The p-value is stated in both instances as .000, which is less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). It is clear from this incredibly low p-value that the differences that were discovered are highly significant. The "Mean Difference" column displays the actual difference between the two groups' mean scores. The mean difference for "Imaginative Writing" is 31.820, and for "Picture Interpretation," it is 26.710. The confidence interval gives us a range of numbers that, with 95% confidence, represent the true mean difference. The confidence interval for "Imaginative Writing" is (30.3721, 33.2679), and the confidence interval for "Picture Interpretation" is (25.1378, 28.2822). The fact that neither confidence interval has a value of 0 further confirms the statistical significance of the disparities. On comparing the effects of the "Imaginative Writing" and "Picture Interpretation" tasks on creativity, the results of the t-tests show that there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores between the two tasks. The reported p-values are less than 0.001, which indicates that it is extremely unlikely that these differences could have arisen by coincidence. The absence of the value 0 in the confidence intervals is another factor supporting the statistical significance of the differences.

Discussion

The study's findings demonstrate that $p < 0.001$ suggests that differences are very significant and a low p-value. The mean difference between the mean scores for the two tasks is used to calculate the real difference. The average gap for "Imaginative Writing" is 31.82, and for "Picture Interpretation," it is 26.710. The 95% confidence interval also applies. The confidence intervals for "Imaginative Writing" and "Picture Interpretation" are respectively (25.1378, 28.2822) and (30.3721, 33.2679). The statistical significance difference is further confirmed by the fact that the confidence interval does not have a value of 0. According to the findings, both "Imaginative Writing" and "Picture Interpretation" assignments have a considerable impact on the creativity of ESL learners' writing, with "Imaginative Writing" having a somewhat stronger influence than "Picture Interpretation." This study rejects the null hypothesis that there is no impact of task types on creativity in writings of ESL learners. The results of this study are consistent with earlier research that investigates the positive effect of creative writing activities on creativity in writings of EFL learners. Studies by (TOK & KANDEMİR, 2014), Ahmed and Bidin (2016), and Dirgeyasa (2018) reported that there is a positive effect of creative writing activities and TBLT on creativity in writings. Moreover, the findings are coincided with studies by (Artes et al., 2019) which shows that creativity level changes with the change in task type. The study by (Turkel & Cetinkaya, 2020) measures the effect of creative writing activities on students' success and the

results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in scores of creativity tasks depending on the types of activities being implemented. The results of this study also answer the research questions raised in the beginning. What impact does task type have on creativity in writing of ESL learners? The task type has a big impact on how creative ESL learners write. "Imaginative Writing" assignments encourage creativity and innovative thought, which results in more interesting linguistic phrases. As they practice using new vocabulary and grammar in imaginative scenarios, language learners become more proficient in their native tongue. These exercises increase learner motivation and engagement, resulting in a more pleasurable language-learning experience. Through exercises like "Picture Interpretation," students can practice critical thinking abilities while analyzing and creatively interpreting visual stimuli. Additionally, creative writing exercises urge students to include cultural components, which fosters a greater comprehension of various viewpoints. Learners grow more adventurous in their language use and problem-solving skills as they build creative confidence. Learning a language is made more effective because of the creativity that task types foster. How does the task type affect the level of creativity in writing of ESL learners? The type of task significantly influences how creatively ESL students write. Language learners' levels and types of creative expression vary depending on the work types they are given. For example, "Imaginative Writing" assignments that promote original storytelling and unrestricted expression frequently lead to increased levels of creativity. Learners frequently explore original concepts, employ figurative language, and demonstrate their creative abilities. On the other hand, more regimented exercises like "Picture Interpretation" may produce different results while still encouraging creativity. These exercises put pressure on students to evaluate visual cues and imaginatively interpret them through tales or descriptions. Even though the creativity displayed in these assignments may be more narrowly focused, it nonetheless indicates learners' capacity to think creatively and employ critical thinking. How does task difficulty affect the ability to write creatively? The capacity to write creatively can be considerably impacted by task difficulty. When students are given assignments that are just moderately difficult, they are encouraged to think critically and come up with new ideas. This kind of ideal challenge encourages a flow state, which results in more complex and creative writing. Tasks that are challenging inspire experimentation and risk-taking, which fosters originality in students' creative expression. Additionally, as they take on challenging writing assignments and come up with creative solutions to challenges, they enhance their problem-solving abilities. Students can explore their creativity within a structured framework by finding a balance between task complexity and suitable coaching, which promotes growth and skill development. Overall, task difficulty has a significant impact on how well writers are able to express themselves and how much they like learning a language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study show that $p < 0.001$, low p-value indicates that the differences are highly significant. The actual difference is obtained from the mean difference of two tasks' mean scores. The mean difference for "Imaginative Writing" is 31.820, and for "Picture Interpretation," it is 26.710. And the confidence interval is 95 %. The confidence interval for "Imaginative Writing" is (30.3721, 33.2679), and the confidence interval for "Picture Interpretation" is (25.1378, 28.2822). The fact that the confidence interval does not have a value of 0 further confirms the statistical significance difference. The results indicate that both "Imaginative Writing" and "Picture Interpretation" assignments significantly affect the creativity of ESL learners' writing, with "Imaginative Writing" having a marginally greater impact than "Picture Interpretation." These findings have implications for educators and curriculum developers because they emphasize the

value of including creative writing assignments in ESL language instruction in order to encourage students' creativity.

Limitations

This study contains some limitations. First, the sample size is very small which does not represent the whole population, and also there is no equal representation of gender so, the data is not balanced. The study was limited in its capacity to generalize because it only included a small group of ESL students from one university. Second, there is no creativity model or theory mentioned in the study that could be discussed in the discussion section. Third, the obtained statistically significant difference in mean scores between both tasks slightly differs. Results can be more prominent by increasing the sample size for the study. To strengthen the validity of the findings, future studies might increase the sample size and draw from a variety of language learner demographics. The study also concentrated on two task categories: "Imaginative Writing" and "Picture Interpretation." A deeper knowledge of how different task types affect creative expression in ESL writing might be obtained by investigating other task types and their effects on creativity.

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