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ENHANCING EFL WRITING THROUGH CREATIVITY: STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY JORDANIAN LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the creative strategies employed by Jordanian learners to enhance their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing skills. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews with 150 EFL students from various academic backgrounds, the research identifies the most effective creative techniques and their impact on writing proficiency. Findings indicate that strategies such as brainstorming, free writing, and the use of visual aids significantly improve students' writing performance and confidence. Additionally, participants reported that engaging in creative writing activities fostered a deeper connection to the language and increased their motivation to write. This study contributes to the understanding of how creativity can play a vital role in EFL education, offering practical implications for educators to integrate creative approaches into their teaching methodologies.

KEYWORDS

EFL writing, Creativity, Writing strategies, Jordanian learners, English as a Foreign Language, Language proficiency, Educational practices.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become paramount, particularly for non-native speakers.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Jordan, like many around the world, face unique challenges in developing their writing skills. Traditional language

instruction often emphasizes grammar and structure, potentially stifling creativity and self-expression. However, fostering creativity in writing can enhance not only the quality of students' work but also their engagement and motivation in learning the language.

Research has shown that creative writing strategies can serve as effective tools for improving language proficiency by encouraging students to explore their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a supportive environment. Creative approaches, such as brainstorming, free writing, and incorporating visual aids, can stimulate cognitive processes that are essential for effective writing. These strategies not only promote linguistic skills but also enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.

In the context of Jordan, where English is taught as a foreign language in schools and universities, understanding how students can utilize creativity in their writing is vital. The Jordanian education system has witnessed a growing emphasis on innovative teaching methods, yet the incorporation of creativity in EFL writing instruction remains limited. This study aims to explore the various creative strategies employed by Jordanian learners to enhance their writing skills and identify their perceived effectiveness.

By investigating the relationship between creativity and EFL writing, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights for educators and policymakers. Understanding how Jordanian learners approach writing creatively can inform the development of more effective instructional strategies that prioritize student engagement and autonomy. Furthermore, this study will shed light on the significance of fostering a creative mindset in EFL classrooms, ultimately aiming to equip

students with the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the creative strategies used by Jordanian EFL learners, emphasizing the importance of creativity in language acquisition and the potential benefits for students' writing proficiency.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the creative strategies employed by Jordanian learners in enhancing their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing skills. The mixed-methods design allows for triangulation of data, enriching the analysis and providing a holistic view of the research topic.

Research Design

The research is structured into two main phases: a quantitative survey followed by qualitative interviews. The quantitative phase aims to identify the prevalence of various creative writing strategies among EFL learners, while the qualitative phase seeks to explore learners' experiences and perceptions regarding these strategies in more depth.

Participants

The study targets EFL learners in Jordan, specifically undergraduate students enrolled in English language courses across several universities. A total of 150 participants were recruited using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and academic background. This sampling method enhances the

representativeness of the findings and allows for a broader understanding of how different groups utilize creativity in writing.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative Phase: A structured questionnaire was developed to gather data on the creative strategies employed by the participants in their writing practices. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions that assessed the frequency of specific creative strategies (e.g., brainstorming, free writing, mind mapping, and the use of visual aids). Additionally, it included Likert-scale items measuring participants' perceived effectiveness and enjoyment of these strategies. The questionnaire was administered online to facilitate participation and ensure anonymity.

Qualitative Phase: To complement the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 participants selected from the survey respondents. The interviews aimed to delve deeper into the participants' experiences with creative writing strategies and their impacts on writing performance and motivation. An interview guide was prepared, focusing on questions related to:

Participants' preferred creative strategies and their application in writing.

Perceived challenges in using creative approaches.

The impact of creativity on their writing skills and confidence.

Suggestions for integrating creativity into EFL writing instruction.

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via video conferencing platforms, lasting

approximately 45-60 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: The survey data were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS) to determine the frequency of creative strategy use and the relationship between demographic variables and preferences for these strategies. Descriptive statistics provided insights into the overall trends, while inferential statistics, such as t-tests and ANOVA, were employed to explore differences among various demographic groups regarding their use and perceptions of creativity in writing.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview transcripts. This process involved several steps:

Familiarization: Researchers read through the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.

Coding: Initial codes were generated based on significant statements related to creative strategies and participants' experiences.

Theme Development: The codes were grouped into broader themes that captured recurring patterns and insights about creativity in EFL writing.

Interpretation: The identified themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature, highlighting the implications for teaching practices and EFL instruction.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the affiliated academic institution. Participants were provided with an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing all participant data, and findings were reported in aggregate form to protect individual identities.

RESULTS

The findings from this study illuminate the various creative strategies utilized by Jordanian EFL learners to enhance their writing skills, as revealed through both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

Quantitative Findings

The survey conducted with 150 participants yielded significant insights regarding the prevalence and effectiveness of creative writing strategies:

Common Strategies: The most frequently employed strategies included brainstorming (75%), free writing (68%), and the use of visual aids (62%). Participants reported that these methods helped them generate ideas and organize their thoughts more effectively.

Perceived Effectiveness: Participants rated the effectiveness of these strategies positively. For instance, 85% of respondents believed that brainstorming significantly improved their writing quality, while 78% found free writing to be an effective way to overcome writer's block.

Demographic Variations: Analysis indicated that younger learners (18-21 years) were more likely to engage in creative writing strategies compared to

older learners (22-30 years). Additionally, female participants reported a higher preference for using visual aids than their male counterparts.

Qualitative Findings

The interviews with 30 participants revealed deeper insights into their experiences and attitudes toward creative writing:

Theme 1: Enhanced Motivation and Engagement: Many learners expressed that using creative strategies made writing more enjoyable and less daunting. One participant noted, "Free writing allows me to express myself without worrying about mistakes, which boosts my confidence."

Theme 2: Overcoming Challenges: While participants acknowledged the benefits of creative strategies, they also reported challenges. Some felt that they lacked guidance on how to effectively implement these techniques in their writing. Others mentioned time constraints as a barrier to practicing creativity regularly.

Theme 3: Need for Teacher Support: A recurring sentiment among interviewees was the need for more support from teachers in incorporating creative writing strategies into the curriculum. Participants emphasized that educators should provide opportunities for creative expression and offer feedback to help them refine their skills.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the significance of creative strategies in enhancing EFL writing among Jordanian learners. The quantitative data demonstrate a clear preference for strategies like brainstorming and

free writing, which are associated with increased engagement and improved writing outcomes. This aligns with existing literature that underscores the role of creativity in language learning as a means to foster autonomy and self-efficacy among students.

The qualitative findings further elucidate the motivations behind these preferences. By providing learners with opportunities to express themselves creatively, educators can mitigate the anxiety often associated with writing in a foreign language. The positive feedback regarding strategies like free writing suggests that such approaches can empower students, encouraging them to take risks in their writing without the fear of immediate judgment.

However, the study also reveals challenges faced by learners in implementing these strategies. The need for explicit guidance and support from educators is crucial in facilitating the effective use of creativity in writing. Teachers should be trained to integrate creative techniques into their curricula, providing structured opportunities for practice and feedback. This is particularly important for older learners, who may require additional encouragement to embrace innovative approaches in their writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the transformative potential of creative strategies in enhancing EFL writing among Jordanian learners. The findings indicate that strategies such as brainstorming, free writing, and visual aids not only improve writing skills but also foster greater motivation and engagement among students.

To maximize the benefits of these creative approaches, it is essential for educators to provide

appropriate support and training. By incorporating creativity into EFL instruction, teachers can create a more dynamic and effective learning environment that encourages students to explore their voices and develop their writing skills.

Future research should explore longitudinal effects of creative writing strategies on language proficiency and investigate the implementation of these strategies in diverse educational contexts. Understanding how creativity can be further harnessed in EFL classrooms will ultimately contribute to producing more confident and capable English writers.

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