

**ACTION RESEARCH TO IMPROVE THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
CREATIVE WRITING AT PRIMARY LEVEL****Misbah Muzaffar**Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi
Education Department**ABSTRACT**

The research was conducted to explore the improvements in the teaching of creative writing in English through action research. The objectives of the study were: to implement strategies to solve problems of teaching creative writing in English through action research, to examine the impact of those strategies on the teaching of creative writing through action research and to recommend strategies for using in the teaching of creative writing in English. Action research approach was used for this purpose. One Section of the 5th grade and its English teacher was selected from an F. G. Girls primary School in Rawalpindi as a sample. According to the spiral of action research, the methodology involved was plan, act, observe, reflect, revised plan, act, observe and reflect. Observational Checklist and structured interview from teacher was used as a tool to collect the data for the research. The results showed that this approach brought positive improvements in the teaching of the creative writing in English. It was concluded that this approach can be used to improve the professional development of the English language teachers. It was recommended that teachers should be empowered to adopt this approach in their future classroom practices. Moreover, they should be provided with opportunities to implement their planning related to the improvements of educational system by practicing action research as practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Writing does not only involve transformation of language into written signs. But it is a thinking process, which involve conscious effort and time at the part of the writer. Writing becomes necessary when one want to express his/hr ideas into written language (Syed, 2007).

White defined writing as

“A means of communication with formal correction and stylistic appropriateness in which the ability to write logically and grammatically connected sequences of sentence is fundamental” (White, 1980, pp.7).

Action research has become increasingly popular around the world as a form of professional learning. It has been specifically well developed in education,

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specifically in teaching and is now used widely across the profession. The aim of action research is to solve immediate and critical day to day problems.

Action research is well defined as:

"Action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational -practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out" (Kemmis and Taggart, 1990, p. 5).

Creative writing became popular in mid 60s in junior and secondary schools and came to be seen by some as true judgment of literacy. It gives free rein to pupil spontaneous expressive reaction and the result could be impressive and this free expression can be the result of grammar exercises, comprehension tests & formal essays. Writing involve mastery of different sub skills such as spelling, the organization of ideas, paragraph construction, the use of linkage devices to show cohesion, punctualization, nominalization(forming noun form other part of speech), the use of referent words and an ability to manipulate various types of clauses (Osborn, 2005).

Basically, writing process involves three steps which are **Composition, Transcription, and Review**. All writings are gone through these steps.

As Composition, transcription and reviewing are the writing process that all writers use, it is important for the teachers to introduce the children's with each of these aspects, teach the strategies needed to undertake each stage and give time to undertake each part of the process

It is important for the teacher to keep in the mind purpose and level of audience in the classroom while teaching writing in the classroom. Teacher should focus on the effective use of language in teaching writing. Different strategies for teaching writing like modeling the writing process, imitating written text, or joints construction of texts, and practice in independent writing, will help the children's to get confidence over their writing and become fluent writers(Winch et al., 2006).

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One of the primary goal of education is to produce such type of the students who intrinsically engage in literacy activities such as the reading and writing. So it is important to determine the factors that motivate the students to regularly engage them in writing. Teacher can use the different motivational strategies to generate student's interest in writing process (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009).

Almost all teachers have some certain abilities which can contribute to the research skills. It is important for teachers to identify their set of skills. Each teacher has their own set of skills like some teachers have ability to collect and interpret statistical data while others in retrospective accounts the key moments of lesson. It is necessary that teacher use their own particular strengths while doing research. Teacher starts her/his research in different context which imposes different constraints. So action research should be designed in a way which can be easily implemented within the pattern of constraints existing in the school. There can be different context for using the action research in the classroom like can be used for the selection of the appropriate teaching methods, learning strategies, improving the methods of assessment and encouraging positive attitude to work etc. (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

Ings (2007) suggested that teachers should be encouraged and supported to use a range of approaches to the teaching of writing and must given time to reflect on what is being learned through these approaches.

Burns (2010) cited Margater, that by reflecting on her own teaching practices she find outs some flaws in her teaching of writing. By carrying out action research she found some useful ways to facilitate her students learning and motivate them for learning. Further Burner, viewed that action research explored the reason of students writing problems and what type of strategies could use to solve their writing problems. Students were sensitized to the difference between formal and informal English, and were given a variety of writing assignments and helped them in grammar.

Action research can be used for improving the teaching of creative writing in English. The study may help the teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and thereby improving the quality of teaching learning process. The study orientated the teachers

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with action research. It has identified the problems of teaching creative writing through action research. The study examined improvements in teaching of creative writing by carrying out action research, after using innovative and latest strategies in teaching. The changes have been assessed through observing pupils.

METHODOLOGY

The study examined the effectiveness of action research on the teaching of creative writing in English at Primary level. It involved mutual work of both class teacher and researcher. Following methodology was used by the researcher in the research.

The study aimed at improving the teaching of creative writing in English at primary level.

The objectives of the study were:

- To implement strategies to solve problems of teaching creative writing in English through action research.
- To examine the impact of those strategies on the teaching of creative writing in English through action research
- To recommend strategies for using in the teaching of creative writing in English

Action research proves to be helpful in bringing improvements in the teaching of the creative writing in English.

The study involved two types of variables. Action research as independent variable and improvement in the teaching of creative writing in English was dependent variable. Action research has potential to produce change quickly because it is carried out by educators in their own work settings. It encourages educators to become involved in research as a way to improve their own practice through their knowledge, power and skills.

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Research approach was both qualitative and quantitative. The action research design was used in the study. New and innovative strategies were used to teach the creative writing in English subject for example, flash card activities, spelling sheets, word sheets, puzzling words, tenses activities, group work, usage of incentives and behavior modification strategies. Moreover, during research only single method was not used to teach the concept of creative writing in English but interactive teaching methodologies were used to teach the concept of creative writing in English subject. The teaching approach was not teacher centered but was student centered. Students were empowered and had the freedom of decision making. Teacher was helped to use and adopt these interactive teaching methodologies and match her teaching methodologies with the various needs of the students. To measure the improvements, observational checklist was used. There were four steps of conducting research: First was identifying the research problem, gathering necessary information, analyzing and interpreting the data and sharing the results with the participant, and developing an action plan.

The schools of Rawalpindi were the population of the study. There are no limits of gender and age among the students. Both private and public schools were the subject of the study. Researcher has worked along with teacher as helper and collaborative researcher.

Non probability sampling method was used for selecting sample. In non probability sampling, purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling highlights the importance of conscious decision making in non random sampling. Only one class (grade 5) was chosen as the sample of the study. The strength of the class was 36 students. The sample was selected from a government sector primary school in Rawalpindi.

Action researchers develop and use a wide variety of quantitative method to collect data. Pre and post observations were used. The pre and post observational checklist was used to measure the results. The interest and understanding level of the students was examined through observations. During observations a checklist was used. The

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checklist includes skills that researcher hope to see in students. Teacher's opinion was measured through structured interview.

Pilot testing of both tools (observation checklist and structured interview from teacher) was conducted after the careful considerations. Two principals of F.G. Primary schools and two class teachers of English subject were requested to evaluate the efficiency of observational checklist. It was verified by the five university teachers from Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.

The research has undertaken the following procedure.

The action research cycle was started through situational analysis. One week was spent to collect data for pre observation and to see the nature of teaching in the classroom. The researcher recorded the teaching styles, classroom environment and students difficulties in learning creative writing in English subject. Second Phase was of planning in which a plan was designed according to the situational analysis. In third act phase, the material was implemented which was planned at the previous stage. After applying new methodologies and using students centered approach, the impact of those changes was observed through post observational checklist. There were significant differences in the recorded information before conducting the action research and after applying the planned material and methodologies. The researcher analyzed and reflects on the results of the observational checklist to reflect on the changing. After reflection on previous results and changing, revised plan was made. In revised plan, some techniques were planned for behavioral and time management problems. It was observed that these aspects were neglected in the first research cycle.

RESULT ANALYSIS

Coding was given to the different responses. Results of each section were computed. Description follows as under:

Coding to different responses: Yes (3), to some extent (2), No (1)

Levels: Lower: 0-12 Average: 13-25 High: 26-38

Table 1: Classroom organization

Pre observation	Level(Pre)	Post observation	Level(post)	Remarks
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15	Average	26	High	There is difference of 11 between both observations which is showing improvements in classroom organization.
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Table: 1 is about classroom organization. Results are showing the greater difference between pre and post observations.

Table 2: Beginning of the lesson

Pre observation	Level(Pre)	Post observation	Level(post)	Remarks
16	Average	26	High	This table is showing the difference of 10 between pre and post observation. Results are showing progress in this section.

This table was about beginning of the lesson. Results of pre and post observations showed progress in teacher's teaching practices in this section.

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Table 3: During the lesson

Pre observation	Level(Pre)	Post observation	Level(post)	Remarks
16	Average	28	High	Here is difference of 12 between both observations. This is indicating the improvements in this section.

This table shows the data observed during the lesson. Results showed the difference of 12 between pre and post observations and also indicated improvements in this section after conducting the research.

Table 4: Instructions for creative writing during the lesson

Pre observation	Level(Pre)	Post observation	Level(post)	Remarks
17	Average	34	High	There is the difference of 17 which is indicating progress in the instructions for creative writing during the lesson

This table includes items about the instruction for creative writing during the lesson. As before conducting the research, different interactive activities were not used by the teacher so results of pre and post observations showed greater difference between two.

Table 5: Ending of the lesson

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Pre observation	Level(Pre)	Post observation	Level(post)	Remarks
17	Average	27	High	Difference, in this section, of 10 which is showing major difference between both sections.

This table is about ending of the lesson. Results of pre and post observations showed major difference between them which was the difference of 10.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The data was collected through pre and post observational checklist and interview from teacher. Quantitative method was used to interpret observational checklist designed by researcher. Coding was given to different responses in the observational checklist.

The checklist was designed to measure the improvements in the teaching of creative writing in English subject through action research. Pre and post observations were included for computing the results.

Second language learning is usually considered a difficult task. Many teachers usually face a lot of difficulty in teaching English language. They are not aware of different techniques and strategies to teach English language. While keeping in view all of these problems, intensive research work is required to introduce innovative ways of teaching creative writing in English. Action research has greater importance in educational sector. It should be introduced in teacher's community at large scale so that they can get benefit from it. The present research was started by observing the teaching practices of English teacher teaching creative writing. Checklist was designed for recording the observations. Researcher spend one week for observing the class before conducting the research.

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Punishment was a big tool in teacher's hand for modifying student's behavior. Such classroom practices did not guarantee the healthy classroom environment for successful teaching learning process. The designed checklist was used for recording observation. Observations were recorded on daily basis. Researcher observed that objectives designed in action phase were meeting successfully. There was significant difference in the results of pre & post observations.

These approach provided opportunities for teacher to interact with her students and to know about their weakness and strengths. She was able to reflect on her teaching practices. When students were given freedom, they were able to express their abilities and weaknesses openly. The approach also enabled them to learn and interact with each other as well. It was also observed that before conducting this research, there was one way communication between teacher and students but during this research, there was two way communication. Teacher was also realizing that reward or encouraging students was more powerful than punishment. It was observed that teacher was trying to relate the content with the real life examples. This discussion has revealed that use of incentive, interesting activities and modifying teaching methodologies according to the nature of content and activities brought positive results regarding students' learning. Teachers can make the teaching learning process interesting by modifying their teaching practices.

Few tips and techniques were suggested to teacher to deal with all the problems. Teacher admired the action research process. She said that it provides a systematic way for identification and solution of problems. She acknowledged its educational importance. Classroom teacher strongly appreciated the importance of action research for professional development. She was very happy that students were taking interest in the learning of English creative writing. She showed her willingness to use it in future and modify her teaching methodologies according to the psychological needs of the students. The school principle also appreciated the efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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The action research was conducted to improve the teaching creative writing in English through action research. The methodology used in the research, was plan, act, reflect and observe and then revised plan. The conclusion, drawn from the analysis of data, highlighted that it was a successful experience to give training of action research to English teacher. She learned that how she can enhance her professional skill while using this approach. This research gave her insight to modify her teaching methodologies and views about teaching learning process, to use interactive methodologies and to match her teaching methodologies with the psychological level of the students. In brief, teacher was satisfied with this research and was anxious to use it in the future. She got awareness that how she can solve her problems related to teaching. It will help her in her professional development. One of the major recommendation made by the researcher is “Action research has greater educational importance but mostly teachers are unaware of action research. It should be introduced at large scale in the educational community so that they can also be aware of its importance and successful results and Orientation of action research should also be given to the educators, policy makers, educational administrators and those serving the educational community.

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Acknowledgement: I here by acknowledge the help and efforts of Prof. Dr. Nabi Bux Jumani in preparing this paper and making it of worth to be considered for publication as research paper.